

**A Comparison of the  
Vocabulary Self-collection Strategy (VSS)  
and the Current Methodology of Vocabulary Teaching  
in Hong Kong EFL Classrooms**

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**A thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree of  
Master of Philosophy**

**In  
Applied English Linguistics**

**@ The Chinese University of Hong Kong**

**July 2002**

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## ABSTRACT OF THESIS

The study here was aimed at comparing the effectiveness of the Vocabulary Self-collection Strategy (VSS) and the current methodology of vocabulary teaching for EFL (English as a Foreign Language) vocabulary acquisition.

A vocabulary acquisition program was set up in order to investigate the research questions and hypotheses. There were seven sessions in the program, each lasted for about two hours. The program involved seventy-eight Secondary one EFL learners in a secondary school in Hong Kong. An experimental approach was adopted for the study. The quantitative data was triangulated with the data gained qualitatively. Subjects in the control group were taught vocabulary by the current methodology of vocabulary teaching which resembled the grammar-translation approach. For the experimental group, the VSS was adopted for the acquisition of vocabulary. Subjects were given opportunities to collect and understand words on their own. After each vocabulary collection activity, there were follow-up activities to consolidate subjects' knowledge of the words they collected.

Four research hypotheses were tested, and the quantitative and qualitative results indicated that (1) Chinese EFL learners are able to acquire vocabulary by the Vocabulary Self-collection Strategy (VSS); (2) Although the VSS is not a better means than the current methodology of vocabulary teaching for EFL vocabulary acquisition, it is equally effective as the current methodology; (3) the VSS is more effective for the retention of vocabulary than the current methodology of vocabulary teaching, and (4) learners are more motivated to acquire vocabulary by the VSS.

The results of the study had implications for curriculum or program designs and for classroom pedagogy.

It was suggested that future research on vocabulary acquisition may wish to explore the following areas: the acquisition and retention of vocabulary in parts of speech other than concrete nouns; the longitudinal effect of the Vocabulary Self-collection Strategy (VSS) on EFL vocabulary acquisition and retention and the effectiveness of the VSS across different educational settings and conditions to determine its universality of application.



## 論文摘要

本項研究旨在比較詞彙自行收集法及現今的英語詞彙教學法在詞彙學習方面的有效性。

爲了探討本研究所訂立的研究問題及假設,一個爲期七節,每節約二小時的詞彙學習課程已在二〇〇一年九月至十月間舉行。研究對象是七十八位本地中一學生。本研究採用了實驗性爲基礎的研究方法。對照組採納了現今的英語詞彙教學法作爲學習詞彙的渠道,而實驗組則採用詞彙自行收集法。在實驗組的研究對象需要自行收集及理解詞彙。在每項詞彙收集活動後,都有後續活動去鞏固他們對所收集的詞彙之認識。

本項研究所訂立的四個研究假設已被驗證。量化和質化的分析結果顯示了:(一)英語爲外語的華人學習者能夠通過詞彙自行收集法去學習詞彙;(二)在詞彙學習的範疇內,詞彙自行收集法並不較現今的英語詞彙教學法遜色;(三)在詞彙記憶方面,詞彙自行收集法則較現今的英語詞彙教學法優越;(四)如果利用詞彙自行收集法,學習者將較有積極性去學習詞彙。

研究的整體結果對課程設計及課堂教學法有重要的啓示。

研究結果亦建議今後有關詞彙學習的研究可探討下列數個課題:除了實質名詞外,其他詞位之詞彙的學習與記憶;在不同教育背景及情況下,詞彙自行收集法對於英語爲外語的詞彙學習及記憶方面之有效性和長期影響,以此探索其可用性及廣泛性。



## **Acknowledgements**

I would like to express my gratitude to all those who have helped in accomplishing this thesis in various ways.

My supervisor, Prof. Joanna Radwanska-Williams, for her unfailing and continuing support, encouragement and professional mentoring throughout the execution of this study. In addition, her constructive comments were especially vital for the completion of this study.

The rest of the thesis committee, Prof. George Braine and Prof. Gwendolyn Gong for providing me valuable comments and insights on the thesis.

The principal, staff and students of CCC Yenching College for their administrative support in organizing the vocabulary acquisition program.

The team leaders, who worked as volunteers, for their participation, support and devotion to the program.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge the unfailing encouragement, compassion and endurance provided by my family.

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## Chapter 1

# INTRODUCTION

The chapter starts with the background for the present study, reviewing the issues of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) vocabulary teaching and acquisition. In response to the problems that exist in EFL vocabulary teaching and acquisition, the Vocabulary Self-collection Strategy (VSS) is recommended as an alternative means through which Chinese EFL learners can acquire vocabulary efficiently. The significance of the study is then outlined. It is followed by the objectives of the study and the four research questions. The organization of thesis will be provided in the last section of this chapter.

## 1.1 Background of the present study

### 1.1.1 The importance of vocabulary in foreign language learning

The issue of vocabulary teaching and acquisition is now receiving more research attention because of its importance in the acquisition of a foreign language. A number of researchers believe that a rich mental lexicon is vital for the successful mastery of a foreign language (Ellis, 1997; Krashen, 1989). Therefore, vocabulary as a component in the acquisition of a language cannot be neglected. Wilkins (1972) believes that the acquisition of vocabulary is even more important than the learning of grammatical rules. He states that “without grammar very little can be conveyed, without vocabulary nothing at all can be conveyed” (p. 111).

Meara (1980) claims that a lot of learners admit that they experience considerable difficulty with vocabulary. Most learners even perceive vocabulary acquisition as their greatest obstacle in language acquisition. It is because comprehension will be seriously distorted by the lack of appropriate vocabulary knowledge. Therefore, the teaching and acquisition of vocabulary should definitely receive more focused attention for the benefits of our language learners.

### **1.1.2 The teaching and acquisition of vocabulary in the Chinese EFL context**

As mentioned in the previous section, the mastery of vocabulary is an essential element of foreign language acquisition. In this section, we will look at vocabulary teaching and acquisition in the Chinese EFL context.

It is widely recognized that Chinese learners spend a large proportion of their studying time for the memorization of texts and lists of words (Biggs, 1992; Watkins, 1983). For many of them, the acquisition of a foreign language means a lot of rote memorization of grammar rules and vocabulary. McNeil (1996, p. 69) claims that many Chinese EFL learners perceive the learning of vocabulary as “the systematic memorization of bilingual word lists, the laborious annotation of the unfamiliar lexis of English and, in the present-day Hong Kong, the immediate recourse to an electronic dictionary whenever a new English word is encountered.”

In Hong Kong, a vocabulary teaching methodology, which resembles the traditional grammar-translation approach, has long been adopted for word instruction [cf.



2.3]. The approach puts a lot of emphasis on rote learning. In addition, it is extremely teacher-centered as teachers play the dominant role in the whole teaching-learning process. Learners, as a result, can seldom develop the necessary skills for autonomous language learning. In the views of many Chinese EFL learners, vocabulary acquisition is a tedious and mechanical task. As a consequence, most of them do not have interest and motivation in word learning.

## **1.2 A response: The present study**

In response to the two major inadequacies of the current methodology of vocabulary teaching in HK EFL classrooms, i.e., the failure to capture students' interest in vocabulary acquisition and develop their autonomous word learning skills, the Vocabulary Self-collection Strategy (VSS) [cf. 2.10] is proposed in the present study as an alternative means for EFL vocabulary acquisition. The effectiveness of the VSS in EFL vocabulary acquisition and retention will be reported and discussed in this study.

## **1.3 Significance of the study**

The present study aims at investigating the effectiveness of the VSS as compared with the current methodology of vocabulary teaching in HK EFL learners' vocabulary acquisition and retention. The study will provide some insights into the potential power of the VSS for EFL vocabulary teaching and acquisition. Moreover, findings from this

study will provide English teachers with some useful information about the essential elements for effective vocabulary teaching.

## **1.4 Research objectives**

The major focus of the present study is to examine the effectiveness of the VSS on EFL vocabulary acquisition and retention. Moreover, learners' motivation towards vocabulary learning under the VSS as compared with the current methodology of vocabulary teaching will be explored. In addition, views on the issues of vocabulary teaching and learning in HK EFL classrooms will be gained. Four research questions are proposed in this study:

- (1) Can Chinese EFL learners acquire vocabulary by the vocabulary self-collection strategy (VSS)?**
- (2) Is the VSS a better means for foreign language vocabulary acquisition than the current methodology for EFL vocabulary teaching in the Hong Kong classroom?**
- (3) Will the VSS be more effective for the retention of vocabulary by learners than the current methodology of vocabulary teaching in HK EFL classrooms?**
- (4) Will learners be more motivated to acquire vocabulary by VSS?**

## **1.5 Organization of thesis**

The thesis consists of six chapters. Chapter One offers a brief introduction to the background and significance of the study together with research objectives.



Chapter Two provides a discussion of the issues of vocabulary in language learning. The traditional grammar-translation approach for vocabulary teaching is introduced and compared with the current methodology of vocabulary teaching in Hong Kong. The use of extensive reading as an alternative means for EFL vocabulary acquisition and its limitations are explored. The Vocabulary Self-collection Strategy (VSS) is then proposed as an alternative means for EFL vocabulary acquisition. The research questions and hypotheses are formulated at the end of the chapter.

Chapter Three describes the design of the study in detail. It includes the selection of subjects, description and justification of lesson plans, the construction of research instruments, the experimental procedures and the methods for data analysis.

Chapter Four presents the findings of the present study. It starts with a descriptive report and statistical analysis of various quantitative data: the pre-, the 1<sup>st</sup> post- and the 2<sup>nd</sup> post-tests on vocabulary. Qualitative data gained from the post-program questionnaire, semi-structured interviews, researcher's and team leaders field notes and interviews with English teachers are presented.

Chapter Five offers a discussion of the quantitative and qualitative data collected from the various instruments. The four research questions are discussed with reference to the data obtained. This is followed by a section evaluating the issues of vocabulary in HK EFL classrooms. The section concludes with the recommendation of the VSS as a powerful tool for EFL vocabulary acquisition and retention.



Chapter Six concludes the study by providing some pedagogical implications for EFL vocabulary teaching and acquisition in HK EFL classrooms. The limitations of the study are discussed and some suggestions for further research are offered at the end of the chapter.

## **Chapter 2**

### **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

This section begins with a discussion of the issues of vocabulary in language learning. Then, the traditional approach and the current approach to the teaching of vocabulary are discussed respectively. First, the traditional grammar-translation approach for vocabulary teaching and its limitations are introduced. It is followed by a review of the current methodology of vocabulary teaching which prevails in Hong Kong EFL classrooms. After presenting the characteristics of the two vocabulary teaching approaches, a comparison between the traditional approach and the current approach is performed. The section then explores the claim for using extensive reading as an alternative means for EFL vocabulary acquisition and its limitation. Afterwards, the importance of autonomy is discussed. In response of the limitations found in extensive reading and the vital roles autonomy plays in language learning, the rationale for the Vocabulary Self-collection Strategy (VSS) is reviewed. The research questions and hypotheses arising from the discussion in this chapter are formulated at the end of the chapter.

#### **2.1 The issues of vocabulary in language learning**

One aspect of language learning that in the past received little attention, but has now become the main focus of a lot of research, is the acquisition of vocabulary. Wilkin (1972, p. 111) has already noticed the important role vocabulary plays in language

learning. He claims that “without grammar very little can be conveyed, without vocabulary nothing at all can be conveyed.” (p. 111) However, the learning of vocabulary is not an easy task. Meara (1980) claims that EFL learners identify the acquisition of vocabulary as their greatest single source of problems. Increasingly, many researchers begin to consider that effective communication relies less upon the understanding of grammar rules than on the possession of an adequate and appropriate vocabulary (Prince, 1996, p. 478). Moreover, it is believed that rich vocabulary knowledge would help grammar acquisition as having knowledge of the words in a text or conversation permits learners to understand the meaning of the discourse, which in turn allows the grammatical patterning to become more clear (Ellis, 1997). Krashen also stresses the importance of vocabulary in language learning, stating, “a large vocabulary is, of course, essential for mastery of a language” (Krashen, 1989, p. 440). Therefore, it is certain that a rich corpus of vocabulary or mental lexicon is the pre-requisite for successful second language learning. To be a successful language learner, one has to possess a rich pool of vocabulary. This then raises the question of how best can vocabulary be learned? Or, what is the most effective means for learners to build up a large corpus of vocabulary?

Perhaps, how much vocabulary learners could acquire depends, to a large extent, on the way they are taught. Therefore, the following sections will be devoted respectively to the discussion of the traditional grammar translation approach for vocabulary teaching and its limitations and the current methodology of vocabulary teaching in Hong Kong.



## **2.2 The traditional approach for vocabulary teaching in most EFL classes and its limitations**

Most EFL classes tend to expose learners to relatively short texts for explanation of specific aspects of lexical, syntactic, semantic and discoursal pattern of the target language. In this setting, vocabulary learning is being treated as a kind of skill-building. However, according to Krashen's Input Hypothesis (Krashen, 1982), this pedagogical approach will only lead to learning but not acquisition. After calculating the time efficiency (i.e., the average number of words acquired per minute) for a number of vocabulary instruction methods, e.g., rich instruction, keyword, contextual analysis, synonyms, etc., Krashen (1989, p. 449) finds that there are two shortcomings commonly existed in the vocabulary instruction methods he examined. First, they are not able to provide a "deep" knowledge of words, with their full semantic and syntactic properties. In addition, they only ask students to learn synonyms or short definitions.

Richards and Rodgers (1986) have described the principal characteristics of the grammar-translation method. They state that when adopting this teaching methodology, vocabulary selection is based solely on the reading texts used, and words are taught through bilingual wordlists, dictionary study, and memorization. In addition, translation plays an important role in the word learning process as lists of vocabulary items are presented with their L1 equivalents, and translation exercises are also prescribed by the teachers.

A grammar-translation lesson would typically have “a list of vocabulary items, and some practice examples to translate from L1 (first language) and into L2 (second language) or vice versa” (Schmitt, 2000, p. 12). Usually, example sentences are used instead of whole texts. That means, new vocabulary items are presented in isolated sentences. As stated by Howatt (1984), one of the features of the grammar-translation method is the adoption of “exemplificatory sentences”.

The second feature of the grammar-translation approach is the employment of vocabulary lists (Hammerly, 1971; Richard and Belgar, 1986; Schmitt, 2000). Students are always expected to learn words from bilingual wordlists. The lists always contain a word from the target language, either a synonym in that target language, or a translation in the mother tongue (Carter and McCarthy, 1988). In the most popular EFL textbooks, glossed words are provided. These glossed words are often considered as the target words for teaching in the English lessons. Students are asked to repeat every new word before anyone knows the word meanings. A lot of time goes into the rote repetition of words. For some textbooks, meanings of individual words are shown in students’ mother tongue. In books without translation, teachers usually provide a definition in L1 after reading aloud the difficult words. However, after learning words from such vocabulary lists or glossary, but only vaguely aware of multiple meanings, students would easily produce incorrect and frequently unintelligible equations between the first and the second language. Moreover, translation would reduce the possibilities for L2 autonomy by linking words exclusively to L1 equivalents (Prince, 1996).



Quoted in Swan (1997), Lado (1957, p. 77) believes that “it is quite an illusion to think, as even literate people sometimes do, that meanings are the same in all languages, that language differs only in the forms used for these meanings.” That means, different languages parcel up meanings into words differently. A word in one language may have various equivalents in another language, depending precisely on what is meant. When listing the ten problems concerning the use of translation in the teaching and learning of vocabulary, Swan (1997) admits that most beginning foreign language learners always resort to simplified translation equivalences between lexical items when they are learning vocabulary. He concludes that “there is more scope for successful transfer between closely related languages than between languages which are not related” (p. 167). As we can see, English and Chinese are two distinct types of languages which vary greatly in grammar, syntax and lexicon. Therefore, the use of translation in the teaching of vocabulary items may not be beneficial to Chinese EFL learners.

In addition, the grammar-translation approach puts heavy emphasis on practice or drills. There are usually a lot of exercises for learners to practice their language skills. Therefore, various exercises are included e.g. sentences for translation into and out of the foreign language.

Moreover, there is a strong focus on oral repetition. When learning vocabulary items, students are always required to say the words repeatedly until they can master their pronunciation successfully. Indeed, some students who may not even have any idea of



what the words mean will repeat them successfully anyway. Most students simply try to memorize the words which they do not really understand.

Vocabulary acquisition in this setting involves the learning of vocabulary items one at a time, by studying words deliberately, and may include the analysis of their roots, prefixes and suffixes. In most cases, learners are taught words one at a time, by teachers giving the explanation or analyzing the morphological structures of the words. Then, the words and structures are practiced until they have been successfully mastered by the learners. Usually, exercises will be followed to check whether learners have learned what is being taught.

McNeill (1993) claims that glossing of texts and the pre-teaching of vocabulary are the two most common approaches to the teaching of vocabulary in most EFL classrooms. Explaining the meaning of unknown vocabulary in advance of a reading activity has continued to be a popular teaching practice since it is believed that it can remove some of the obstacles to reading comprehension. If students can understand the meaning of the new words beforehand, they will have the opportunity to develop their fluency in reading without having to interrupt the process by looking up the meaning of unfamiliar words in a dictionary. Therefore, when teachers are confronted with comprehension passage with difficult vocabulary items, the common practice is to pick out the difficult words and pre-teach them to students so as to smoothen the reading process.

Krashen (1989) states that the meanings of a word cannot be adequately represented by a synonym. In reality, it is very difficult to come up with a precise definition of a

word. Cornu (1979) also claims that two words are synonymous if and only if they can be interchanged without the slightest change in cognitive or emotive import. Martin (1984) conducted a study which examined the vocabulary errors advanced language students generate. The study reveals that “the teaching of vocabulary via glosses or ‘synonyms’ in the target language is a prime culprit in the production of unhappy lexical choices” among the students (Martin, 1984, p. 130). All these studies provide support that vocabulary instruction using synonyms may not help learners to acquire vocabulary successfully and efficiently.

Krashen (1982) also stresses the importance of learners’ affective state in the language learning process. He believes that many vocabulary teaching methods are at best boring, and are at worst painful. For Krashen, language learning will occur only with the presence of acquisition. He believes that acquisition as the picking up of a language subconsciously which characterizes language in informal setting and which is similar, if not identical, to the way children develop ability in their L1 (Krashen, 1982). Furthermore, learning is a conscious process in which structural rules and conventional usage is explained, studied and learned explicitly. For acquisition to take place, “learners need to be exposed to large amounts of L2 input which is meaningful, interesting or relevant, not grammaticality sequenced, and in a tension-free environment” (Hafiz and Tudor 1989, p.166). As a result, it is questionable if the grammar-translation approach to vocabulary teaching would provide a meaningful, interesting and relevant environment for vocabulary acquisition to take place.



Added to this, the traditional approach would not help to nurture autonomous language learners. It is because the vocabulary items are pre-selected by the teachers and the meanings of different words are also provided by the teachers. As a result, students would not be able to develop the initiative to learn words by themselves. Table 1 below summarizes the characteristics and limitations of the grammar-translation approach to the teaching of vocabulary.

**Table 1. Characteristics and limitations of the grammar-translation approach to the teaching of vocabulary**

Characteristics	Limitations
1. new vocabulary items are presented in isolated sentences	- cannot provide a language-rich environment in which the meanings of words could be conveyed, understood and retained
2. the use of bilingual vocabulary lists	- students would easily produce incorrect and inappropriate equations between the L1 and L2
3. the use of translation for the explanation of word meanings	- a word in one language may have various equivalents in another language - translation would reduce the possibility for the development of L2 autonomy
4. a heavy focus on oral repetition	- students who may not even have any ideas of what the words mean can repeat them successfully
5. word meanings are explained in terms of synonyms or short phrases	- the meaning of a word cannot be adequately represented by a synonym - difficulties in coming up with a precise definition of a word
6. selection of words by teachers and meanings of words readily provided by teachers	- do not help to nurture autonomous language learners

From the above analysis, it is doubtful if the traditional approach to vocabulary teaching, which prevails in most EFL classes, would facilitate vocabulary acquisition.



### **2.3 The current methodology of vocabulary teaching in Hong Kong**

It is widely recognized that Chinese EFL learners spend a large portion of their study time memorizing lists of words (Biggs, 1992; Watkins, 1983). For many Chinese learners, vocabulary learning means “the systematic memorization of bilingual word lists,” or “the laborious annotation of the unfamiliar lexis of English textbooks” (McNeill, 1996, p. 69). Maybe this is the result of the way vocabulary is taught in their language learning experience.

Students in Hong Kong are commonly taught in a way which, to a certain extent, resembles the traditional approach to the teaching of vocabulary which has been discussed in the previous section.

As there is no written literature on the way vocabulary is taught in Hong Kong EFL classrooms, a review of the major English textbooks currently in the market and interviews with English teachers were conducted so as to gain comprehensive and valid picture of the current methodology of vocabulary teaching in Hong Kong. It is believed that they can compensate for the lack of appropriate literatures in reflecting the current methodology of vocabulary teaching in HK EFL classrooms.

A comprehensive review of the major English textbooks adopted in most secondary schools in Hong Kong was done by the researcher. It was found that comprehension passages are often used to present new vocabulary items. Usually, these kinds of textbooks are composed of different chapters, each with a particular theme. For each chapter, there is often a comprehension passage followed by some exercises. The

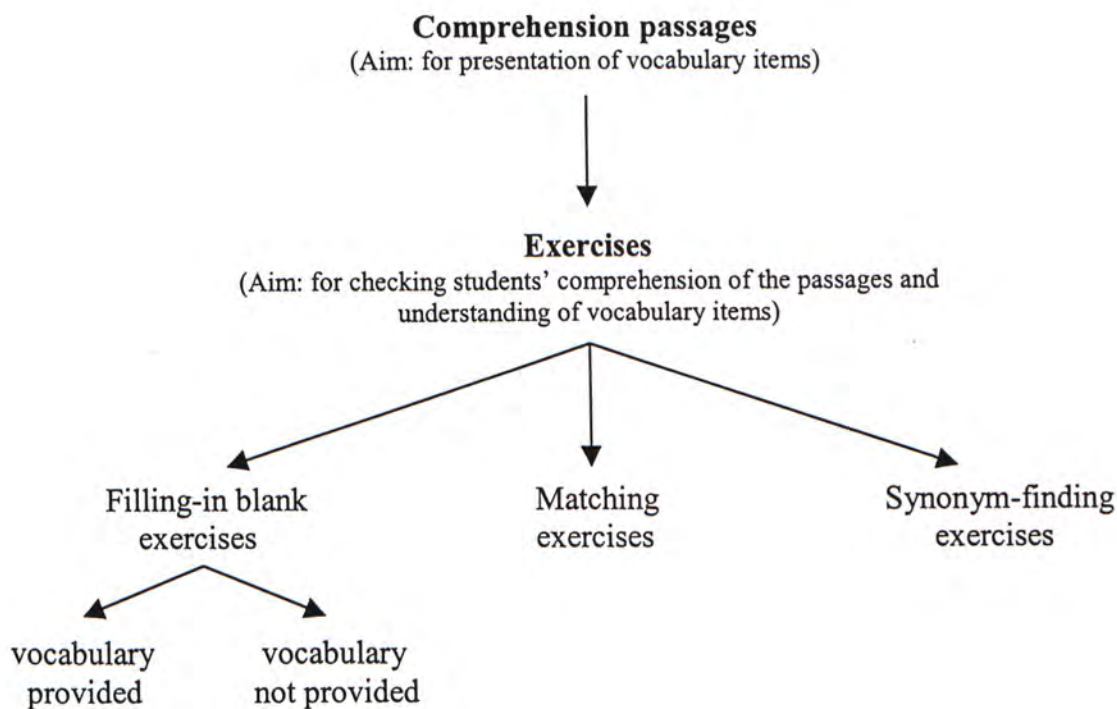
exercises aim at checking students' comprehension of the passage and understanding of certain vocabulary items which the author(s) believe(s) that students should learn.

The vocabulary exercises usually take three forms: Filling in blank, matching and synonym-finding. For the blank filling exercises, some textbooks for lower level students would have the vocabulary provided for students to select their answers from, whereas those for the more advanced ones would require students to seek answers from the comprehension passages. Sometimes, the vocabulary exercises may appear in matching format. That is, students are asked to match the target vocabulary items with their synonyms or short definitions. Finally, learners may be given short phrases and asked to find words in the comprehension passage which are identical in meaning to those which are given. For example, they may be asked to find a word in a passage which means the same as "the time when something happens." Students are expected to provide the answer "occasion" after reviewing the passage.

In order to get a more clear picture of the ways vocabulary is presented in most EFL textbooks, teachers' version of the textbooks were also reviewed. For a documentation of the textbooks reviewed, please refer to Appendix A. A common finding is that almost every teachers' version contains glossary and bilingual vocabulary checklists. The L1 equivalents of certain vocabulary items together with their definitions in English are given in the glossary. In addition, there may be vocabulary checklists at the end of each chapter summarizing the vocabulary which ought to be learned by the



students upon completion of the chapter. The common way in which most textbooks are structured is presented by the following figure.



**Figure 1: Structures of English textbooks reviewed**

Apart from the review of the major textbooks used in secondary schools in Hong Kong, five English teachers teaching junior forms in local secondary schools were also interviewed by the researcher so as to gain a complete view of the current methodology of vocabulary teaching in Hong Kong.

Semi-structured interviews were carried out with five English teachers in two local secondary schools. Core questions which focused on two major areas were set up before the interviews. They included the ways they teach vocabulary and their opinions



towards the traditional approach to EFL vocabulary teaching which prevails in many EFL classrooms. Other questions concerning their difficulties in teaching vocabulary, their opinions on how students can develop a rich mental lexicon and their opinions on the Extensive Reading Scheme (ERS) were asked and will be discussed in 4.6.4. For the interview question, please refer to Appendix K.

Concerning the ways the interviewees teach vocabulary, it is found that the most popular means is the adoption of comprehension passages. All interviewees would make use of comprehension passages to teach new vocabulary items. These passages are mostly from the official English textbooks selected by the school authorities. Teachers typically use comprehension passages to introduce new words and they pick up the related vocabulary items to teach the students. The translation of the words in students' L1 is also provided by the teachers. Moreover, a lot of emphasis is put on the pronunciation of the vocabulary items. Most interviewees would require their students to pronounce the words until they can successfully master the pronunciation. In addition, they assign dictation tasks to students in which students are required to spell some or even all of the vocabulary which appears in the comprehension passages.

Most interviewees held a negative opinion towards the traditional approach for EFL vocabulary acquisition. They claimed that this approach may not be suitable for students in Hong Kong because they lack the initiative to learn and they are weak in English. In addition, they claimed that this approach is very monotonous and is not able to capture students' interest in learning vocabulary.

As the format of the interviews was semi-structured, some related issues were brought up. It is claimed that students would have a deeper impression of the vocabulary which is more related to their daily lives or personal experience. For instance, they would be more likely to remember the words that are related to the drama series on television.

The interviewees also complained that students are too passive in word learning. They are scared of learning words as they usually think that learning vocabulary implies a lot of rote repetition and memorization. This may be related to the ways vocabulary is taught in their English learning experience.

When asked how students can develop a rich corpus of vocabulary, most teachers believe that reading more books would help. They also expressed their opinions about the Extensive Reading Scheme (ERS) in English which is a territory-wide reading scheme implemented at upper primary and junior secondary levels in Hong Kong. The ERS and teachers' opinions towards the scheme will be discussed in greater details in a 4.6.4.

## **2.4 The similarities between the current methodology of vocabulary teaching in Hong Kong and the traditional grammar-translation approach to EFL vocabulary acquisition**

From the review of English textbooks and interviews with English teachers, it is justifiable to say that the current approach to vocabulary teaching in Hong Kong resembles the traditional approach to a large extent since there are a number of similarities between them.



First, the employment of bilingual vocabulary checklists is one of the main features of the traditional approach. Among the popular English textbooks in Hong Kong, it is not difficult to find vocabulary checklists and glossary. Although some of them appear only on teachers' copy, there is always the tendency for teachers to adapt these checklists and glossary as the focus of vocabulary instruction.

Second, as its name suggests, the grammar-translation approach puts a heavy emphasis on translation. Usually, vocabulary items are presented with their meanings in students' L1. In addition, students are often required to translate vocabulary from English into their L1 or vice versa. With reference to the textbooks in Hong Kong, the presentation of vocabulary items with their Chinese equivalents may not be a common practice. However, the interviews reveal that teachers often provide the translation equivalents to the students. Again, we can see that the methodology adopted in Hong Kong is somewhat identical to the traditional approach.

According to Richards and Belgar (1986), accuracy is another main theme of the grammar-translation approach. In Hong Kong, dictation tasks have long been adapted to check students' ability to memorize the spelling of the words they have learned. Only an accurately spelt word would be marked as correct. From this, we can see that accuracy is also emphasized in the teaching of vocabulary in Hong Kong EFL classrooms.

In discussing the traditional approach in teaching vocabulary, Krashen (1989) mentions that students are always asked to learn synonyms or short definitions. This phenomenon also appears in Hong Kong. From the exercises in English textbooks, it is



found that students are always asked to find synonyms in the comprehension passages they have just read. In some cases, they are given short phrases or definitions and asked to replace them with words which represent the meanings of the phrases given. The exercises give practice in replacing one item in a sentence with a new one from the passage, reinforcing the illusion that words are interchangeable. Writers of textbooks are “proficient at providing utterance-frames that permit these substitutions without distortions of meaning” (Martin, 1984, p. 431). However, as discussed earlier, a word cannot be perfectly represented by a synonym without the slightest change in meaning. As a result, these types of exercises cannot adequately perform their aim to help learners acquire word meanings.

Lastly, it is clear that both the traditional approach to the teaching of vocabulary and the approach which prevails in Hong Kong EFL classrooms are both very teacher-centered. It is always the teachers who decide what is going to be learned by students. As a result, learners are placed in a very passive word-learning environment. The similarities between the two approaches are summarized in Table 2.

**Table 2. Similarities between the current methodology of vocabulary teaching in Hong Kong and the traditional grammar-translation approach to EFL vocabulary acquisition**

<b>Grammar-translation approach</b>	<b>Current approach in HK EFL classroom</b>
1. The employment of bilingual vocabulary checklists	1. Vocabulary checklists and glossary are commonly found in popular English textbooks
2. A heavy emphasis on translation. Vocabulary items are always presented with their meanings in students' L1	2. The presentation of vocabulary items with their Chinese equivalents is not a common practice of textbook writers, but teachers often provide the translation to students
3. According to Richards and Rodgers (1986), accuracy is another main theme of this approach.	3. Dictation tasks which emphasized accuracy are adapted to check students' ability to memorize the spelling of the words they have learned
4. Students are always asked to learn words in terms of synonyms or short definitions	4. Exercises in textbooks require students to find synonyms in the comprehension passages they have just read
5. Teacher-centered	5. Teacher-centered

From the above analysis, we can see that the current methodology of vocabulary teaching in Hong Kong resembles the traditional approach to a great extent. Having discussed the limitations of the traditional approach for EFL vocabulary acquisition in the previous section, it may be justifiable to say that Hong Kong students are taught vocabulary in a way which does not facilitate vocabulary acquisition.

Since it is generally believed that book reading would increase learners' word power and language standard, therefore the Hong Kong Extensive Reading Scheme (HKERS) in English was implemented in the junior secondary and upper primary levels. Until 1999, about 50% of local secondary schools and 15% of the primary schools have participated in the scheme. Extensive reading has widely been recognized and used as an



alternative means through which vocabulary could be acquired. The rationale for the use of extensive reading as a means for word acquisition will be discussed in the section which follows. Another alternative method for the acquisition of vocabulary, the Vocabulary Self-collection Strategy (VSS), will be compared to extensive reading in a later section in this review.

## **2.5 Extensive reading as an alternative means for EFL vocabulary acquisition**

### **2.5.1 Research evidence supporting the use of extensive reading for the acquisition of vocabulary**

In face of the problems found in most EFL classrooms concerning the teaching and learning of vocabulary, Krashen (1982) suggests that extensive reading will lead to language acquisition provided that certain preconditions are met. They include the accessibility of a large amount of comprehensible input, learners' interest in understanding the message and a focus on the meaning but not the form of the message. This view is supported by Nuttall (1982, p. 168) who states that "the best way to improve one's knowledge of a foreign language is to go and live among its speakers. The next best way is to read extensively in it." Nagy and Herman's (1987) study shows that only a small percentage of vocabulary is learned through direct vocabulary instruction. Bell is in the same line with Nagy and Herman; he claims that the traditional approaches to the teaching of vocabulary, in which the number of words taught in each class is carefully



controlled (words are often being presented in related sets), is much less effective in promoting vocabulary growth than simply getting students to spend time on silent reading of interesting books (Bell, 1998).

Apart from the studies mentioned, many other research studies have also proved the effects of extensive reading on L2 vocabulary acquisition (Cho and Krashen, 1994; Day, Omura and Hiramatsu, 1991; Hafiz and Tudor, 1989; Hayashi, 1999; Mason and Krashen, 1997). Owing to the nature of extensive reading, it is claimed that considerable vocabulary acquisition can take place. In an extensive reading program, learners would be exposed to unfamiliar vocabulary repeatedly in similar or different contexts. This multiple exposure would lead to learners' receptive vocabulary knowledge (Day, Omura and Hiramatsu 1991).

### **2.5.2 Definitions of extensive reading**

Extensive reading is also termed as "free voluntary reading" (Krashen, 1993, 1997), "reading experience" (Masuhara, Kimura, Fukada and Takeuchi, 1996) and "guided independent reading" (Hsui, 1994). Many researchers have tried to give a solid and valid definition for extensive reading. Bamford and Day (1997, p. 6) defined extensive reading as "reading large amounts of text with the aim of getting an overall understanding of the materials" and when engaging in extensive reading, "readers are more concerned with the text than the meaning of individual words or sentences". Masuhara, Kimura, Fukada and Takeuchi (1996) have also provided a useful working

definition for extensive reading. They state that extensive reading “involves reading of fairly large quantities of materials (authentic or graded); for pleasure; in an individualized manner with students having full control over the selection and fulfillment of the reading and pace of reading; the learners will not be required to prove their understanding after the reading and the teacher’s role is to provide help if necessary” (p. 264).

### **2.5.3 Materials used for extensive reading**

#### **2.5.3.1 Graded readers**

Most of the studies conducted are concerned with the acquisition of vocabulary through extensive reading of graded readers. Graded readers refer to those extended texts, mostly fiction, written in language reduced in terms of structure and vocabulary (Hill, 1997). These simplified texts have been criticized for their lack of authenticity and as a result, could not prepare students learning to read in the real world. Advocates of graded readers, however, claimed that “in order for extensive reading to do its work – building automaticity of word recognition, vocabulary knowledge and develop positive attitude towards reading – the reading material must be well within students’ linguistic ability” (Bamford and Day, 1997, p. 8). This is in fact a dilemma faced by extensive reading.



### 2.5.3.2 Authentic texts

Being aware of such a dilemma, some other researchers included authentic materials in their studies concerning extensive reading. For instance, Hayashi (1999) used a textbook consisting of many newspaper articles about the problems facing the world in his study of the relationship between extensive reading and L2 vocabulary acquisition. Another study done by Barfield also adopted newspaper articles as part of the reading materials. Learners' preference of authenticity is well supported by the study done by Pickard (1996). It is found that newspaper is one of the largest numbers of reported uses by L2 learners for leisure reading. The subjects in Pickards' study claimed that the availability of current affairs materials was relatively good outside school, but that there was little provision of such literature at school.

## **2.6 Limitations of extensive reading**

From the controversy on the materials used for extensive reading, it is justifiable to say that using extensive reading as a way to acquire vocabulary is not without its drawbacks. Apart from the problem of authenticity, extensive reading seems to suffer from its lack of variation in text structure. Barfield (2001) argued that "an exclusive focus on the extensive reading of narrative text, though necessary and effective as a primary base, is however insufficient." Therefore, attention should be paid to the "simultaneous development of extensive reading and vocabulary with general readership expository text".



In his article written in 1995, Davies states the problems in implementing an extensive reading program. He claims that an extensive reading program costs a certain amount of money, which may not be always available. Moreover, it is by no means easy to set up an extensive reading program as it requires tremendous investment of time and administrative effort. Also, extensive reading, when done in school, needs to take up precious class time. This is particularly true in the case of Hong Kong as the syllabus is tightly packed. It is difficult, if not impossible, for teachers to squeeze out class time for pleasure reading.

In addition to the problems in implementation, there are also doubts about the definition of extensive reading. Masuhara et al. (1996) and Nation (1997) raise questions concerning the optimal amount by which reading is considered as extensive. Susser and Robb (1990) are aware of the fact that there is no agreement on the definition of the term *extensive*. Should it be thirty pages an hour as suggested by Hill and Thomas (1993), at a rate of at least 200 words per minute and up to 250 words or more (Hill, 1996) or 60 hours over three months (Hafiz and Tudor, 1989). Nation (1997) has identified two factors in determining the necessary amount of reading: (a) the frequency level of the learners' vocabulary, and (b) the length of time that the memory of a meeting with a word is retained. But can these serve as universal guidelines or standards for foreign language learners who engage in extensive reading?

Apart from the controversy on the optimal amount required in extensive reading, Nation (1997) claims that vocabulary learning from extensive reading is very fragile.

Therefore, he claims that it is critically important that an extensive reading program must provide learners with the opportunity to keep meeting words that they have met before. As a result, it adds more complexities for the adoption of extensive reading as a means to acquire vocabulary.

When engaging in extensive reading, learners always have to guess the meaning of various unknown words. However, guessing from context is a very complicated and often difficult strategy to carry out successfully. To guess correctly from context, learners need to know about nineteen out of every twenty words, i.e., 95% of a text. Sökmen (1997) has outlined the problems with inferring word meanings from context. First, he states that acquiring vocabulary mainly through guessing words in context is likely to be a very slow process. However, many learners have only limited time to spend on acquiring vocabulary. Second, inferring meaning from context is an error-prone process. Third, students' insufficient vocabulary knowledge may slow down the guessing process even when they are trained to use flexible reading strategies. Finally, guessing from context can only help learners to meet the most immediate need – comprehension, but it doesn't necessarily result in long-term retention.

Moreover, vocabulary learning from extensive reading is a very gradual process. Chin (2000) claims that a single context may provide learners with only a 10% chance of learning the meaning of an unfamiliar word from guessing. Added to this, he states that learners may have difficulties in making a clear distinction between core concepts of the meanings and those which are specific to the context given.



Hunt and Belgar (1998) believe that extensive reading and listening might be more effective for more proficient intermediate and advanced students. That is to say, students should have an acceptable level of English proficiency before extensive reading can be beneficial to their vocabulary learning process.

According to the Input Hypothesis (Krashen, 1982), which is the theoretical base on which extensive reading is built on, every human being possesses a Language Acquisition Device (LAD). When the LAD is involved, language is acquired subconsciously, i.e., acquisition without knowing. This process of acquisition is also termed as “incidental learning.” Therefore, it is believed that extensive reading facilitates vocabulary acquisition because of the presence of large amount of L2 input in an informal setting. This setting, as stated by Krashen’s Input Hypothesis, is the prerequisite for language acquisition to take place. However, different learners may have different definitions of the term “informal setting.” Some may even perceive a setting as formal once they have to read a book, especially one not written in their L1. According to the *Collins Cobuild English Dictionary* (1998), “informal” is used to describe something that is done “unofficially or casually without planning.” Based on this definition, then, extensive reading cannot be considered as something that is done in an informal setting since it is “planned.” Susser and Robb (1990) also argue that the claim that extensive reading is “pleasurable” is in itself questionable since the reading is an assignment, and most of us do not take pleasure in assignments. Yu (1996) conducted a research on the effectiveness of an Extensive Reading Scheme (ERS) on secondary students in Hong

Kong. The result shows that only 68.5% of the experimental students believed that the scheme had increased their interest in reading, the remaining 30% of the students did not feel that the scheme had made any difference. In addition, only 27% of the subjects had developed reading in English as their favorite pastime (Yu, 1996).

Apart from the criticisms found in the literature, interviews were conducted by the researcher with English teachers currently teaching in two local secondary schools in order to gain their opinions on the Extensive Reading Scheme (ERS). Most teachers think that the books are not able to capture students' interest. In addition, students do not seem to understand the rationale of extensive reading. As they do not find the books interesting, they simply try to look for the answers by flapping through the books in order to complete the assigned questions. As a result, students cannot develop an interest in reading and become autonomous readers.

## **2.7 The theoretical base of extensive reading as the guideline for an effective means for the acquisition of vocabulary**

To a certain extent, extensive reading is beneficial to L2 vocabulary acquisition, but it is not without its drawbacks. In face of the deficiencies of extensive reading together with the inefficient skill-building and grammar-translation approach to vocabulary learning, is there any alternative means for L2 learners to acquire vocabulary?

Although there are apparently six problems with extensive reading [cf. 2.6], its belief that a large amount of L2 input would facilitate vocabulary acquisition can hardly



be denied. Simply stated, an abundant supply of L2 input in an informal setting is necessary for L2 vocabulary acquisition.

In addition, it is widely recognized that the ultimate aim of extensive reading is to turn language learners into independent, autonomous life-long readers. While the students read extensively, having ownership over the materials they choose to read in a tension-free environment, these contribute to the development of independent reading and language learning.

Furthermore, extensive reading also intends to provide the opportunity for learning to occur outside the classroom (Nation, 1997). When the language learners have developed an interest in extensive reading, they will read outside class independently without teachers' supervision and monitoring.

The important goal of extensive reading --- to nurture autonomous language learners, has also become one of the most important objectives of language learning. The following section will discuss the importance of autonomy in language learning before we come up with a plausible methodology which may turn our language learners into autonomous vocabulary learners.

## **2.8 The importance of autonomy in language learning**

Before going into depth on the importance of autonomy in language learning, it is necessary to define the term *autonomy*. In the applied linguistics literature, *autonomy* is regarded as a capacity for active, independent learning. Little (1991, p. 4) stated that

learner autonomy is “essentially a matter of the learners’ psychological relation to the process and content of learning --- a capacity for detachment, critical reflection, decision-making, and independent action.” Holec (1985) and Bergen (1990) also defines *autonomy* in terms of a capacity. Holec sees *autonomy* as “a matter of acquiring those capacities which are necessary to carry out a self-directed learning program” (Holec, 1985, p. 180). For Bergen, autonomy means “a capacity and willingness to act independently and in cooperation with others” (Bergen, 1990, p.102).

After defining the term *autonomy*, we come to the question of why *autonomy* is vital for language learning. Why do we need to turn our language learners into autonomous, independent language learners?

As knowledge is infinite, the continuous pursuit of learning after the completion of formal education is now widely accepted as a legitimate, ultimate goal and need in the field of education. “Because of the complexity and rapidity of change in our highly technological societies,” it is therefore necessary to aid learners “to develop the attitude that learning is a life-long process and to acquire skills of self-directed learning” (Knowles, 1975, p. 23). As stated by Trim (1988, p. 3), “no school, or even university, can provide its pupils or students with all the knowledge and the skills in their active adult lives”. Therefore, it is vital for learners to develop and take up the responsibility to learn by themselves.

An autonomous learner will take an active role in the learning process, generating ideas and availing himself of opportunities for learning, rather than simply reacting to



various stimuli of the teacher (Boud, 1998; Knowles, 1975). Added to this, an autonomous learner is “prepared to take, or does take, responsibility for his own learning” (Dickson, 1995, p. 167).

In discussing the components of autonomy, Littlewood (1996) states that *willingness* and *ability* are necessary for learners to develop the capacity for autonomy. He adds that “ability depends on possessing both *knowledge* about the alternatives from which choices have to be made and the necessary *skills* for carrying out whatever choices seem most appropriate” (p. 428). Concerning willingness, it depends on “having both the *motivation* and the *confidence* to take responsibility for the choices required” (Littlewood, 1996, p. 428). In short, in order to be an autonomous language learner, one has to possess *ability* (which includes knowledge and skills) and *willingness* (which includes motivation and confidence).

A question is raised here: how can learners develop the ability and willingness for autonomous language learning? In the traditional foreign language classrooms, teachers are always the sole agent through whom knowledge is transferred to the language learners. Fernandes et al. (1990, p. 101) also claim that “language learners in the classroom often tend to revert to the traditional role of pupil, who expects to be told what to do. . . . As a result, some learners have become teacher-dependent and often feel that it is the teacher alone who is responsible for any learning and progress that takes place”. However, this would not facilitate autonomous language learning but instead, impede it. Therefore, teachers also have their roles to play in learners’ development of *autonomy*.

They should teach students “how to become independent and autonomous learners” (Yang, 1998, p. 27). Nunan (1993) suggests that teachers should shift from their traditional roles to become active participants, monitors, consultants and guides when they work closely with their students’ language learning and help students develop better techniques for learning. Dam (1995, p. 5) suggests that teachers should “focus on learning rather than teaching; be engaged in the learner’s learning process; be open to learners’ ideas and suggestions; support learners’ initiatives and be a consultant as well as a participant and a co-learner in the learning process”.

In traditional Chinese classrooms, the teacher is regarded as the authority. Both teachers’ and learners’ view of classroom roles are deeply rooted in the Chinese tradition of seeing oneself as a part of “relational hierarchy” (Chang and Holt, 1994, p. 105). This hierarchical relationship may impede students’ development of *autonomy* as being autonomous often requires that students work independently of the teachers. As a result, teachers should lead learners onto the road of *autonomy* especially in the Chinese cultural context. As suggested by Wenden (1991), teachers should transform themselves into helpers and facilitators and provide guidance and suggestions to their students concerning the use of learning strategies.

To achieve the above, teachers should create “a learning environment or methodology which intends to help students to develop the skills and attitudes that sustain autonomous learning” (Ho and Crookall, 1995, p. 238). Consequently, students’ ability and willingness to create a “personal learning context” may be fostered in class



and ultimately “outside class, through the systematic use of the wider community as a context for learning” (Littlewood, 1996, p. 433).

Concerning the aspect of vocabulary learning, in order to turn students into autonomous vocabulary learners, a methodology must be devised or adopted to develop their skills and attitudes for the development of *autonomy*.

## **2.9 Learners’ immediate surrounding as an inexhaustible and effective means through which vocabulary could be acquired**

Littlewood (1996, p. 433) believes that an autonomous learner would make use of his “wider community” as the learning context; then, can this be applied to the learning of vocabulary? In fact, learners’ surrounding environment may be another alternative source from which they can acquire vocabulary. Learners can easily acquire a lot of vocabulary anytime and anywhere. They can even acquire numerous words when they are doing shopping in department stores or supermarkets.

Richek (1988) believes that to be good vocabulary learners, students must become alert to the words in their environment. Learners’ immediate surrounding provides a large corpus of vocabulary which is authentic, vivid and is related to their everyday life. Once their sensitivity is enhanced, they would become autonomous and independent word learners. In fact, this is also one of the claims for extensive reading. Nation (1997) states

that one of the benefits of extensive reading is the provision of opportunity for learning to occur outside the classroom. Yu (1999), in her discussion of the features of the extensive reading scheme in Hong Kong secondary schools, argues that students are expected to assume the role of an independent reader. However, most learners are not sensitive to the fact that they are surrounded by millions of words in their environment. Therefore, teachers cannot simply throw learners into the huge sea of vocabulary and expect them to acquire words on their own without any initial guidance, especially for Chinese EFL learners who are used to the traditional grammar-translation, teacher-centered approach to vocabulary learning. It is highly understandable that they may find difficulties in adapting to a sudden change of mode in learning vocabulary; therefore, it is important that certain skills should be taught to help them move towards a more learner-centered approach to vocabulary acquisition. In order to raise learners' sensitivity, teachers need to create conditions that can help students learn a great deal (Palmer, 1998). If such conditions are created, learners will gradually develop the ability to construct learning outside the classroom. Therefore, the Vocabulary Self-collection Strategy (VSS) will serve as a kind of intervention to nurture autonomous vocabulary acquisition among Chinese EFL learners. The following section will provide a detailed description of the VSS including its assumptions, characteristics and advantages for the acquisition of vocabulary.



## **2.10 The Vocabulary Self-Collection Strategy (VSS) as an effective means to acquire vocabulary**

In face of the deficiencies found in the current methodology of vocabulary teaching in Hong Kong EFL classroom, the vocabulary self-collection strategy (VSS) is proposed in the current research as an alternative means through which vocabulary could be acquired.

Many studies have proved the effect of the vocabulary self-collection strategy (VSS) (Haggard, 1982, 1986; Ruddell, 1995; Ruddell and Shearer, 2001) on foreign language vocabulary acquisition. In Haggard's (1982, 1986) and Ruddell's (2001) studies, learners were asked to look for words they heard or saw in their own environment and bring them to class for discussion. They had to explain the meaning of the words and tell where the words were found. Then they recorded the words into their own journals with definitions agreed on by the whole class. After that, consolidation work was carried out; e.g., writing stories, sentences, and dialogues using the words they had learned. Finally, students were tested on the words. The results of the studies provide strong support that the VSS may be more effective than the synonym-teaching vocabulary instruction that prevails in many EFL classes.

Haggard (1982) outlines the two conditions under which more effective vocabulary development could be promoted. First, the words which are taught should be directed towards those words students need to know. That means, the words to be taught must be important to students. They can be any words that students found in their daily lives.

Concerning the traditional approach to vocabulary teaching, she criticizes that working from A to Z in a dictionary will not satisfy this condition, and following a list set by book publisher will not do so either.

Second, the instruction given should help students develop the skills necessary for “continued, independent vocabulary growth” (Haggard, 1982, p. 203). That is to say, an effective method for the teaching of vocabulary should enable students to build up an autonomous skill in acquiring vocabulary or simply stated, it should direct students to become active, autonomous and independent vocabulary learners.

Haggard (1982, 2001) believed that the Vocabulary Self-Collection Strategy (VSS) satisfies the above conditions for effective vocabulary development. Haggard (1982) conducted a study to examine the vocabulary learning behavior of 42 university students taking their first course in reading strategy. In her study, a modified version of VSS was used in which no instruction or follow-up activities took place. University students were chosen as the subjects of the study as they were believed to be more mature and competent in reflecting and analyzing their own word learning behavior.

The result of the study reveals that 60% of the new words learned by the subjects were non-course related. That means, most of the words were not learned during class. The analysis of students’ commentaries led to two major findings. First, students found it most efficient and easy to learn words which labeled or defined their own experience. Second, students’ self-analysis indicated a general playfulness and enjoyment in word



learning. In conclusion, they believed that the act of collecting words increased their sensitivity to new words and interest in word learning (Haggard, 1982).

Another study on VSS was carried out by Ruddell and Shearer (2001). The subjects were seventeen students in eighth grade who enrolled in an intensive 45-minute daily reading intervention program. The study, which lasted for nine weeks, aimed at documenting the vocabulary development of the subjects as they engaged in the systematic use of the VSS as one component of the intervention.

Each of the subjects was asked to select one word per week that he or she wanted to nominate for the class list. Subjects were allowed to choose words from any source. At the end of each week, students were tested in their ability to spell each word, explain its meaning and write a meaningful sentence using the words. The data were collected through the following sources: the lists of words collected each week for vocabulary study, end-of-week and three-week-interval test results, journal entries of the teacher and students, comparison of VSS words and test scores with word lists that comprised the seventh and eighth grade spelling curriculum.

The result of the study shows that when students were given the opportunities to select their words, they would choose important, challenging and interesting words to learn. Moreover, they will learn self-chosen words and their spelling, retain that learning over time, and devote more effort to learning their own words than they will to the pre-selected vocabulary lists (Ruddell and Shearer, 2001).

### **2.10.1 Assumptions of VSS**

As the aim of the VSS is to turn learners into active and independent word learners, the underlying assumptions of VSS are to foster long term acquisition and development of vocabulary (Ruddell and Ruddell, 1995). It is used as a tool to heighten learners' awareness and motivation towards word learning. Ruddell and Shearer (2001), advocates of VSS, claim that VSS rests upon the assumptions that (1) vocabulary instruction is aimed at reducing barriers to reading comprehension – that is, instruction intended to provided students with immediate meaning for a word that will be encountered in text; (2) vocabulary instruction is aimed at long-term retention, deep understanding of words and word meanings, and independent word learning.

### **2.10.2 Defining characteristics of VSS**

The defining characteristics which make VSS a powerful tool to raise learners' awareness include: (1) It focuses on words learners want and need to know, words important to them and for which they show interest and curiosity. (2) It stimulates word learning that occurs naturally in learners' lives and thus guide them in becoming independent word learners (Ruddell and Ruddell, 1995).

### **2.10.3 Advantages of VSS**

VSS has the potential not only to reduce the limitations of traditional word learning instruction with regard to student choice and motivation (e.g., de-contextualized



wordlists, definitions by synonym-explanation; “learning” by rote memorization), but also increasing learners’ word awareness, sensitivity towards words around them and strategic abilities for independent vocabulary learning. Learners would become sophisticated in their ability to seek for opportunities for vocabulary learning and to reflect on themselves as word learners. Further, VSS can foster an increase in their intrinsic interest in vocabulary acquisition. (Ruddell and Shearer, 2001).

## **2.11 Research questions**

In order to see whether vocabulary instruction approach similar to VSS can act as an alternative means through which vocabulary could be acquired, the proposed study will investigate the effectiveness of a modified version of VSS on the acquisition of vocabulary by Chinese EFL learners. It will focus on the influence of this modified version of VSS on learners’ development of vocabulary knowledge. Also, learners’ perception and opinions towards the VSS as compared with the current approach to the teaching of vocabulary will be examined. Four research questions are proposed in this study:

- (1) Can Chinese EFL learners acquire vocabulary by the Vocabulary Self-collection Strategy (VSS)?**
- (2) Is the VSS a better means for foreign language vocabulary acquisition than the current methodology for EFL vocabulary teaching in the Hong Kong classroom?**

**(3) Will the VSS be more effective for the retention of vocabulary by learners than the current methodology of vocabulary teaching in HK EFL classrooms?**

**(4) Will learners be more motivated to acquire vocabulary by the VSS?**

The research questions are translated into eight hypotheses in order to gain more detailed information about the effectiveness of the VSS and the current methodology of vocabulary teaching on learners' acquisition of vocabulary. The eight research hypotheses are:

**Hypothesis 1:** Chinese EFL learners will be able to acquire vocabulary by the VSS.

**Hypothesis 1 (Ho):** Chinese EFL learners will not be able to acquire vocabulary by the VSS.

**Hypothesis 2:** the VSS will be a better means than the current methodology of vocabulary teaching for foreign language vocabulary acquisition.

**Hypothesis 2 (Ho):** the VSS will not be a better means than the current methodology of vocabulary teaching for foreign language vocabulary acquisition.

**Hypothesis 3:** the VSS will be more effective for the retention of vocabulary than the current methodology for vocabulary teaching.

**Hypothesis 3 (Ho):** the VSS will not be more effective for the retention of vocabulary than the current methodology for vocabulary teaching.

**Hypothesis 4:** Learners will be more motivated to acquire vocabulary by the VSS.

**Hypothesis 4 (Ho):** Learners will not be more motivated to acquire vocabulary by the VSS.



## **Chapter 3**

# **DESIGN OF THE STUDY**

As mentioned in Chapter 2, the present study aims at investigating Chinese EFL learners' acquisition of vocabulary by a modified version of the Vocabulary Self-collection Strategy (VSS) as compared with the current methodology of vocabulary teaching which prevails in many EFL classrooms. In addition, learners' motivation in learning vocabulary under the two different modes will be examined.

Learners' acquisition and retention of vocabulary are operationalized as their scores in the pre-program, post-program and second post-program tests on vocabulary, their comments in the post-program questionnaire and post-program semi-structured interview.

For learners' motivation in learning vocabulary, it is operationalized as the comments in the post-program questionnaire; the post-program semi-structured interview and the field-notes written by the researcher and the team leaders during the program.

### **3.1 Selection of subjects**

The subjects for the present study were 78 Secondary One Chinese EFL students in a secondary school in Hong Kong. The rating of the school is approximately Band 3 according to the Hong Kong's school banding system. That means, students studying in this schools have a lower academic achievement. In other words, they are also expected

to have a lower level of English proficiency and are generally considered less able learners in English. Secondary One students were selected for this study as they are believed to have attained a certain level of English competence, having finished the Primary School syllabus and being relatively less affected by the public examination pressure. All the subjects had learned English as a foreign language (EFL) between 6 and 9 years in primary schools and kindergartens in Hong Kong. At the commencement of the study, they had just begun their study in Secondary One. Due to the restriction of school policies, the subjects could not be randomly assigned. However, in order to ensure that subjects in both the experimental and control groups were having similar level of vocabulary knowledge, a pre-program test on vocabulary was administered. The subjects were from two Secondary One classes. There were 39 students (20 males and 19 females) in each class. The characteristics of the subjects are summarized in Table 3.

**Table 3. Characteristics of the subjects**

<b>Subjects' ethnicity:</b>	Chinese students of English in Hong Kong
<b>Education level:</b>	Secondary One
<b>Banding of school subjects studied in:</b>	Band 3
<b>Level of English proficiency:</b>	Low
<b>Years of English learning:</b>	6 to 9
<b>Total number of subjects:</b>	Experimental group: 39 (20M and 19F) Control group: 39 (20M and 19F)



### **3.2 The vocabulary acquisition program**

A vocabulary acquisition program was organized during September, 2001, to October, 2001. There were a total of seven lessons which were held on seven consecutive Saturday mornings. Each lesson lasted for approximately two hours. Subjects in the control group were taught by the current methodology of vocabulary teaching which prevails in HK EFL classrooms whereas the Vocabulary Self-collection Strategy (VSS) was adopted for the acquisition of vocabulary for the experimental group. For the schedule of the program, please refer to Appendix B.

### **3.3 Description and justification of lesson plan**

#### **3.3.1 Teaching methodologies adopted for the study**

Subjects in the control group were taught by the current methodology of vocabulary teaching which prevails in many EFL classrooms in Hong Kong. In this approach, which is to a certain extent similar to the grammar-translation approach, the vocabulary that is to be learned is selected by the teachers. In addition, there is a heavy emphasis on translation and pronunciation. Furthermore, students are always asked to learn words in terms of synonyms or short definition.

A typical lesson adopting the traditional approach will usually proceed as follows: First, a teacher presents new vocabulary items by highlighting the words in a comprehension passage before asking students to do the reading. Sometimes, picture cards will be used to introduce new words. Next, the meaning of the vocabulary is

supplied by the teacher in English or students' L1 depending on students' proficiency level. Afterwards, the teacher will provide the pronunciation of the words and ask the students to repeat or mimic the words orally until they can master the pronunciation successfully. A heavy focus is put on the use of regular and repeated drills and imitations.

In face of the problems found in the pre-selected vocabulary items which prevail in most EFL classrooms, words that are highly related to learners' everyday experience have been selected as the target for investigation in both the control and the experimental groups. It is believed that the chosen categories, vocabulary of food, clothes and household items, are directly related to the subjects' personal experience.

The Vocabulary Self-collection Strategy (VSS), which is the main focus of the present study, was adopted for the acquisition of vocabulary in the experimental group. In VSS, learners are expected to learn words on their own. They have to collect words from their surrounding environment and bring in class for discussion (Haggard, 1982, 1986; Ruddell and Ruddell, 1995; Ruddell and Shearer, 2001). During class discussion, students are required to explain the word meanings and tell where the words were found. After that, they write down the words into their own journal together with the definitions agreed by the whole class. Then, there are some consolidation exercises e.g. story-writing, sentence-making or dialogue-composing using the words they have collected and learned. Lastly, students are tested on the words.



### **3.3.2 Vocabulary selected for the study**

The vocabulary items selected for the present study are mostly concrete nouns and a few verbs. The concrete nouns include vocabulary of fast food, vegetables, fruit, seafood, meat, household items, fashion and clothes, whereas the verbs chosen are verbs of food preparation.

Vocabulary of food has been selected as the main target for investigation because food is at the center of many of our important activities. In addition, it is believed that food nourishes language because of its importance as much of our language contains reference to it (*English Teaching Forum*, Oct-Dec, 1998, p. 35). The reference conjures up images worth a thousand words each. For example, we may use food expression to describe someone's physical appearance (e.g., "His belly shakes like a bowl full of jelly"); or, to describe someone's personality (e.g., "Mary is as sweet as sugar"); or, to describe a situation (e.g., "Something is fishy here").

Concrete nouns are selected as they are more compatible with the Vocabulary Self-collection Strategy (VSS) which requires learners to collect vocabulary on their own. In addition, the subjects for the study were secondary one students who had a comparatively low level of English proficiency. Therefore it was believed that subjects would find it more manageable if they were asked to collect concrete nouns than other types of vocabulary. However, in order to look at the effect of VSS on learners' acquisition of vocabulary other than concrete nouns, a few verbs which were highly related to the chosen topics are included so as to increase the significance of the study.

### **3.3.3 Lesson plan for the control group**

As mentioned in 3.4.1, the current methodology of vocabulary teaching was adopted for the teaching of target vocabulary items for the control. The teaching materials were mostly comprehension passages and picture cards. For lessons in this group, the researcher first presented new vocabulary items one by one using picture cards. Then, comprehension passages on the selected topics for the individual lessons were adopted. When using comprehension passages as teaching materials, the researcher would highlight the target vocabulary in the passages for individual, focused instruction. A heavy emphasis was put on the successful pronunciation of the vocabulary items. Exercises were included in every comprehension passage. They included exercises in blank filling, matching and answering short questions. In every lesson, there were consolidation exercises for subjects to practice the vocabulary they had learned during the lesson and to examine if they had understood what was taught. The extended exercises included crossword puzzles, listening exercises, chess game, etc.

In order to provide a clear and concrete picture of the way vocabulary was presented in the control group, the detailed lesson plans of two individual lessons will be described in the following paragraphs. For the detailed lesson plans, please refer to Appendix C.



### Sample lesson plan 1: Fast food

The category of vocabulary selected for this lesson was fast food. Approximately two hours were used for the instructional procedures. Two objectives were set up for this lesson. First, subjects were expected to master the pronunciation of the target vocabulary items of fast food. Second, they were also expected to understand the meaning of the vocabulary items. The teaching materials included picture cards of fast food, two comprehension passages on fast food and a listening exercise.

The lesson was divided into three main parts: motivation (10 minutes), presentation (90 minutes) and consolidation (20 minutes).

Subjects were first motivated in order to let them get prepared and develop initial interest in the forthcoming lesson. Therefore, at the beginning of class, the researcher tried to motivate the subjects by asking them to nominate the names of their favourite fast food and their favourite fast food restaurants in Cantonese.

After motivating the subjects, the target vocabulary items were presented by three steps. First of all, subjects were shown different picture cards of fast food. The words were then written down on the blackboard. The researcher read the words aloud and provided their meanings in subjects L1, i.e., Cantonese. Afterwards, subjects were asked to repeat the words until they could master the pronunciation successfully.

As the current methodology of vocabulary makes extensive use of comprehension passages to introduce vocabulary items, two comprehension passages were adopted as step two and three for presentation. The titles of the passages were "Candy's birthday

meal” and “Who’s for a hamburger.” Since subjects had already learned the vocabulary of fast food in the first part of the presentation, they were asked to locate the words they had learned in the passages and explain their meanings in L1. Afterwards, the researcher went through the passages with the subjects and special attention was paid to the vocabulary of fast food. Each comprehension passage was accompanied by some practicing exercises. Subjects had to make use of the vocabulary knowledge gained to complete those exercises.

It is believed that consolidation is needed in order for subjects to strengthen the knowledge of vocabulary they had acquired. In this lesson, subjects were asked to do a listening exercise which required them to take a food order.

#### *Sample lesson plan 2: Household items*

In order to make the treatment received by the control group less monotonous so as to reduce the dropout rate, some minor adjustments were made in a few lessons. For instance, in lesson 5, for which the topic is household items, a picture-labeling exercise instead of a comprehension passage was adopted for instruction. However, in order to ensure that subjects were taught in a way which resembled the current methodology of vocabulary teaching in Hong Kong, the focus of instruction was put on the pronunciation and translation of vocabulary items.

At the beginning of the lesson, 15 minutes were devoted to motivate the subjects. The researcher pointed at the furniture in the classroom, for instance, desk, fan, chair, etc.



and asked the subjects for the names of the furniture. Then, subjects were asked what household items could be found in their homes.

The target vocabulary, household items, was presented through a picture-labeling exercise. The exercise contained pictures of different household items and the subjects had to identify the items in the various pictures by writing down the vocabulary which represented them. The researcher aided the subjects in the completion of the exercises by providing guidance or answers. When going through the answers, the researcher put heavy focus on the pronunciation of the target vocabulary items. Subjects had to read aloud the words several times until the researcher was sure that they had mastered the pronunciation. In addition, the translation of the words in the subject's L1, i.e., Cantonese was also given.

In order to consolidate subjects' knowledge of vocabulary learned, consolidation work was carried out. Three tasks were designed to strengthen their learning.

In Task One, subjects were asked to locate different household items they had learned on the floor plan of a house. They had to answer questions like "Where is the refrigerator?" In order to answer the question, they needed to understand the meaning of the word *refrigerator*. Then, they had to refer to the floor plan and locate the position of the refrigerator.

A categorization exercise was adopted as the second task. In this exercise, subjects were provided with sixteen words of household items. They were asked to fill in a vocabulary network using the words given. The network tested their ability to

differentiate the places where different household items could be found in a house. Before completing the vocabulary network, the researcher asked the subjects for the L1 meanings of the vocabulary provided and their pronunciation. The answers were checked upon completion of the exercise.

In order to add interest to the lesson, task three was designed. In this task, subjects were divided into groups of four. Each of the group members had to draw the floor plan of his or her own home on a piece of paper. Afterwards, they needed to describe what they had drawn to the other group members using the vocabulary learned in the lesson.

The above two sample lesson plans illustrate that the treatment received by the control group resembled the current methodology of vocabulary teaching which prevails in many Hong Kong's EFL classrooms. Although some minor adjustments were made, every effort had been put to ensure that the focus of each lesson was identical to the rationale of the methodology under study.

#### **3.3.4 Lesson plan for the experimental group**

The Vocabulary Self-collection Strategy (VSS), which is the main focus of the current study, was adopted for the acquisition of vocabulary in the experimental group.

The present study will look at the effect of VSS on raising learners' word awareness and word learning behavior. Many EFL learners in Hong Kong are used to the teacher-centered approach to language learning. Under this learning mode, it is difficult,



if not impossible, for learners to develop the sensitivity towards words around them. Word learning is usually a process in which learners are readily presented with vocabulary items and their meanings in L1. With everything well prepared by teachers, learners can seldom develop the sensitivity and awareness towards the words in their surrounding environment. The VSS, as its name suggests, emphasizes the acquisition of vocabulary by learners themselves. When compared to the traditional approach, the VSS is more learner-centered. Learners have to play an active role in the word learning process as there will not be anyone who presents them with vocabulary items and explains their meanings to them.

Owing to the learner-centered nature of the VSS, subjects in the experimental group had to learn new words on their own. However, students in Hong Kong are used to the teacher-centered mode in English language learning, it is difficult to ask them to acquire new words independently without any initial guidance. In order to trigger their awareness towards the words in their surrounding environment, three outings (one to a fast food restaurant and two to a supermarket) were arranged in order to provide opportunities for subjects to collect new words. Outings were included as the treatment for the experimental group as they could serve as a trigger to make subjects aware that words are found anywhere in their daily lives. More detail is provided in 3.6.2.

Since the focus of VSS is on learners' self-retrieval of words, therefore, in the present study, different means were provided for subjects in the experimental group to collect words. Apart from words found in our surrounding, learners can also find a lot of

words by reading authentic reading materials. Therefore, in the present study, authentic reading materials like magazines, instruction booklets of electrical appliances, recipes from local newspapers, etc., were included as the means through which subjects could collect vocabulary. After each vocabulary-collecting activity, subjects were asked to nominate the words they had collected and the researcher wrote them down on the blackboard. When nominating words, subjects needed to explain the meanings of the words in either English or their mother tongue. The researcher provided the pronunciation upon subjects' failure to read aloud the words they nominate. As flawless pronunciation is not the emphasis of VSS, there was no rote oral repetition or mimic imitation of vocabulary in the experimental group.

After the word-nomination, consolidation exercises were designed to strengthen the knowledge of the vocabulary they had collected through the outings or reading activities. They included matching exercises, word puzzles and listening exercises. The purpose of these exercises was to "facilitate long term retention of words and to allow students to use words in a meaningful way" (Ruddell and Ruddell, 1995). The aim of the exercises was similar to the purpose of post-reading activities found in some of the extensive reading programs, they were used to reinforce what students have acquired through the vocabulary self-collection activities and to give a sense of progress for students (Renandya, Rajan and Jacobs, 1999).

Two of the lessons plans will be outlined in the following paragraphs for the purpose of showing the mechanism of the Vocabulary Self-collection Strategy (VSS) and



the treatment given to the experimental group. The two lessons chosen are of the same topics as the two lessons described in 3.4.3 for the ease of comparing the different treatment received by the experimental and control groups.

### *Sample lesson plan 3: Fast food*

The teaching point of this lesson was vocabulary of fast food. The class time allowed was approximately two hours. It was believed that subjects had learned certain vocabulary items of food in primary schools. There were three objectives for the lesson: (1) to provide an authentic opportunity for subjects to collect vocabulary of fast food through an outing to a fast food shop; (2) to let subjects understand the meanings of the words they had collected through the experience of vocabulary self-collection; and (3) to help the subjects master the meanings and the pronunciation of the vocabulary through various consolidation exercises. The teaching materials included a class handout, a listening exercise and plain paper.

Permission was gained from the school and parents for subjects to participate in the outings to collect vocabulary. Two second-year postgraduates in Applied English Linguistics at CUHK were invited to be the team leaders. The team leaders were responsible for managing the discipline of the groups they were in charge of. In addition, each team leader was asked to write down field-notes about subjects' learning behavior during the outings.

In order not to affect the business and normal operation of the fast food shop visited, subjects were divided into three smaller groups. Each group of thirteen or fourteen subjects was led by a team leader. In addition, subjects were briefed on the rules they should follow when they were on the trip.

Before the outing, subjects were instructed on the details for vocabulary-collection. First, they were told the target vocabulary items they had to collect during the trip i.e. vocabulary of fast food sold in a fast food shop. Second, when they were collecting vocabulary, they needed to write down the words and be sure that they understood their meanings. They were also told that there would be a vocabulary nomination activity for the words they had collected. Third, they had to collect vocabulary group by group. That means, when one group was collecting vocabulary in the fast food shop, the remaining two groups had to wait outside the shop. Furthermore, each group was given ten minutes to collect vocabulary.

After the vocabulary-collecting activity, all subjects returned to the classroom for vocabulary nomination and consolidation exercises. Subjects were given 15 minutes to nominate the words they had collected and the researcher wrote the words down on the blackboard. While nominating vocabulary, subjects were asked to explain the meanings of the words either in English or in their mother tongue. If the subjects failed to pronounce the words, the researcher would provide the pronunciation. However, subjects were not asked to read aloud the words repeatedly until they knew the pronunciation.



Consolidation exercises were designed and adopted so as to facilitate long-term retention of words and to allow students to use words in a meaningful way (Ruddell and Ruddell, 1995). In this lesson, three tasks were included to consolidate subjects' word knowledge.

In the first task, subjects were divided into four groups to carry out a class survey on their favourite fast food using the words they had collected. They were provided with sample questions to be asked when conducting the survey. For the second task, subjects were asked to complete a listening exercise which required them to take food orders. The final task was menu design. Subjects were formed into groups of four. Each group needed to design a menu of fast food for their new fast food shop "Mac 1A". When designing the menu, they had to use the vocabulary of fast food they had learned. Finally, each group presented their menu to their classmates and a class voting was held for the best menu.

#### Sample lesson plan 4: Household items

As previously mentioned, students in the experimental group were also asked to collect words through authentic reading materials. Therefore, in this lesson, no outing was arranged. Instead, subjects were told in the previous lesson to bring with them authentic reading materials about household items, such as articles or advertisements on newspapers, magazines, catalogues and instruction booklets of electrical appliances. for vocabulary collection during class.

The class time for the lesson was about two hours. The two objectives for the lesson were to provide subjects an opportunity to collect vocabulary of household items from authentic reading materials and to enable them to understand the meanings of the words they collected.

At the beginning of class, 15 minutes was spent on motivating the subjects. The researcher asked the students if they could provide the names of the furniture found in the classroom in Cantonese. After that, subjects were asked to tell their classmates the household items found in their homes.

The next thirty minutes was for the subjects' self-collection of vocabulary. They were divided into groups of four for the sharing of reading materials. They were told to highlight the vocabulary of household items and write them down for nomination. In addition, they were asked to make sure that they understood the meanings of the words they collected.

After collecting the target vocabulary, subjects nominated the words in the following 30 minutes. While nominating, subjects were required to provide the spelling and the meanings of the words in English or the meaning of the words in their L1, Cantonese. The researcher wrote all the nominated words on the blackboard and provided the pronunciation upon subjects' failure in pronouncing the words.

In order to strengthen subjects' knowledge of vocabulary learned, two consolidation exercises were adopted. The two exercises were identical to task 1 and task



3 of the consolidation exercises for the control group. Please refer to 3.4.3 for a detailed description of the exercises.

Table 4 summarizes the treatment received by the control and experimental group:

Table 4. A comparison of the treatment received by the control and the experimental groups

	Control group	Experimental group
Number of subjects: ( <i>Controlled variable</i> )	39 (20 males and 19 females)	
Vocabulary knowledge of the subjects before the treatment: ( <i>Controlled variable</i> )	A pre-program test on vocabulary was administered on both groups and no significant difference was found	
Vocabulary teaching methodology adopted: ( <i>Experimental variable</i> )	The current methodology of vocabulary teaching which prevails in HK EFL classrooms	The Vocabulary Self-collection (VSS) Strategy
Teaching materials:	1. Comprehension passages 2. Picture cards 3. Consolidation exercises	1. Outings for the collection of vocabulary 2. Authentic reading materials 3. Consolidation exercises
Selection of vocabulary:	Teacher, i.e., the researcher	Learners
Teaching focus:	1. Meaning of words presented through the use of synonyms or short definitions 2. Heavy focus on pronunciation 3. Use of L1 translation	1. Meaning of words obtained by learners through the process of vocabulary self-collection 2. No rote oral repetition



### 3.4 Construction of Research Instruments

The data were collected with the following instruments: (1) a pre-program, a post-program and a second post-program tests on vocabulary, (2) a post-program questionnaire, (3) a post-program semi-structured interview, (4) researcher's and team leaders' field notes and (5) interview with English teachers. Table 5 below lists all the instruments with reference to the research hypotheses to be tested.

**Table 5. Summary of hypotheses and research instruments**

Hypothesis	Instruments
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pre-program test on vocabulary</li> <li>• 1<sup>st</sup> post-program test on vocabulary</li> </ul>
1 (Ho)	
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pre-program test on vocabulary</li> <li>• 1<sup>st</sup> post-program test on vocabulary</li> <li>• Post-program questionnaire</li> <li>• Semi-structured interviews with subjects</li> </ul>
2(Ho)	
3	
3(Ho)	
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Post-program questionnaire</li> <li>• Semi-structured interviews with subjects</li> </ul>
4(Ho)	

#### **3.4.1 The pre-, post- and second post-program tests on vocabulary**

In order to investigate subjects' acquisition of vocabulary by the Vocabulary Self-collection Strategy (VSS) in comparison with the current methodology of vocabulary teaching in Hong Kong's EFL classrooms, tests on vocabulary were designed to determine subjects' vocabulary knowledge before and after the treatment. As the

underlying assumptions of VSS are to foster long-term retention, deep understanding of words and word meanings (Ruddell and Ruddell, 1995), a second post-program test was adopted to examine subjects' retention of vocabulary under the two different teaching methodologies.

As mentioned in 3.3.2, the vocabulary selected for the present study included both nouns and verbs. The nouns chosen for investigation are vocabulary of fast food, vegetables, fruit, seafood, meat, household items, fashion and clothes. In order not to confine the significance of the study to nouns only, verbs of food preparation were included in the study.

All the three tests aimed at examining subjects' vocabulary knowledge in the above categories. Before the tests were administered, the test items were examined by three experienced English teachers currently teaching junior secondary classes to ensure that they were properly designed and of appropriate level for the subjects.

The pre-program test served two distinctive functions. First, to gauge subjects' vocabulary knowledge before they received the treatment. Second, as discussed in 3.2, due to the constraints of school policies, the subjects could not be randomly assigned to the experimental or the control groups. As a result, something had to be done to ensure that the two groups possessed similar level of vocabulary knowledge in the selected categories before the commencement of the program. Therefore, the second function of the test was to serve as the means through which subjects' vocabulary knowledge could



be compared on a similar basis. The scores of the pre-test would indicate if there was a significant difference between the vocabulary knowledge of the two groups.

For the post-test, it was administered to investigate if the different treatment received by the experimental and control groups brought any significant difference in subjects' vocabulary knowledge immediately after the program.

As one of the aims of the VSS is to facilitate long term retention, deep understanding of words and word meanings (Ruddell and Shearer, 2001), the present study also look at subjects' retention of vocabulary after the program. For this purpose, a second post-test was administered. It aimed at examining if the two different teaching methodologies resulted in different retention of vocabulary between the subjects in the experimental and control groups.

The tests were divided into three sections, each testing subjects' different categories of vocabulary.

The first section tested the vocabulary of fast food, vegetables, fruit, seafood, meat and household items. Multiple-choice format was exploited. The multiple-choice format was adopted as this format allows the intention of the test compiler to be clearly conveyed to the test takers. In addition, this format does not require test takers to deploy the skill of writing. Furthermore, it reduces subjects' exposure to test stress (Jonz, 1976). Since the subjects of the present study were secondary one students who had a lower level of English proficiency, the multiple-choice format would be appropriate to test their vocabulary knowledge.

Hughes (1989) states that the main difficulty in testing productive lexical knowledge is the need to limit the candidate to the lexical item test compiler has in mind, while using only simple vocabulary when designing the test item. As a result, he suggests that one best solution to this problem is resorting to the use of pictures. As most of the vocabulary selected for the study were concrete which can be unambiguously presented by pictures, therefore pictures were believed to be the best way to test subjects' knowledge on the selected vocabulary.

As one of the commonly-quoted disadvantages of the multiple-choice format is the effect of guessing on test scores, a picture-labeling format was used in the other two sections so as to reduce the effect of guessing on overall test scores.

Section two tested subjects' knowledge of vocabulary of clothes. People wearing different kinds of clothes were shown and subjects had to label the thirteen clothing items choosing from the twenty vocabulary of clothes provided.

Vocabulary of food preparation was tested in section three. In this section, subjects were given a series of pictures showing the procedures of making a banana milk shake. They had to fill in the blanks in the recipe using the verbs on food preparation provided.

Please refer to Appendices D, E and F for the three tests.



### **3.4.2 The post-program questionnaire**

In order to look at subjects' perception of the VSS and the current methodology of vocabulary teaching in Hong Kong EFL classrooms, a questionnaire was administered after the program. (Appendices G and H)

The questionnaire aimed to elicit information centering on the following three major areas: (1) subjects' opinions towards the current methodology of vocabulary teaching in Hong Kong EFL classrooms (for the experimental and control groups), (2) subjects' opinions towards the VSS (for the experimental group only) and (3) subjects' general opinions towards EFL vocabulary acquisition (for the experimental and control groups).

Subjects' background information such as sex, age and years of English learning was collected in section 1 of the questionnaire. Section 2 and 3 included statements on the current methodology of vocabulary teaching and VSS respectively. For instance, "I like to learn words from comprehension passages" and "I enjoy learning words by collecting them myself." The subjects were asked to respond to those statements on a five-point scale from (1) *Strongly Agree* to (5) *Strongly Disagree*. Open-ended questions were included in section 4 (four questions for the experimental group and three for the control). A sample question in this section is, "In your opinions, what are the characteristics of an effective approach for EFL vocabulary acquisition?" Open-ended questions were adopted as they helped to gain a better and more comprehensive

understanding of the subjects' opinions and attitudes towards EFL vocabulary acquisition.

### **3.4.3 The post-program semi-structured interviews with sub-samples of subjects**

The post-program interviews served a two-fold function. First, they supplemented and confirmed the validity and reliability of the information gained in the post-program questionnaire. Second, as mentioned in Chapter 1, since there was not enough written information on the current methodology of vocabulary teaching which prevails in Hong Kong EFL classrooms, the post-program interview helped to elicit related information from students' perspective which served as a supplement to the interview with English teachers.

Twenty students (10 from the experimental and 10 from the control), with even distribution of males and females, were selected to engage in a face-to-face conversation with the researcher on some open-ended questions. The interview questions are given in Appendices I and J. The researcher would ask some related follow-up questions on the spot while the conversation was in progress. Each interviewee was encouraged to express his or her opinions freely and to come up with any related issues. Each interview lasted for about 10 minutes. All the interviews were audio-taped and transcribed.



#### **3.4.4 Researcher's and team leaders' field notes**

In the present study, outings were included in the treatment for the experimental group. The three team leaders, including the researcher, would write down field notes to record subjects' attitudes and behavior during vocabulary learning for further analysis (Appendix K).

#### **3.4.5 Interview with English teachers**

In order to provide a valid, comprehensive and updated picture of the current methodology of vocabulary teaching in Hong Kong, five English teachers currently teaching junior secondary level were interviewed. Four of the interviewees taught at the same school as the subjects in which two of them were the English teachers of the subjects. One interviewee taught at another local secondary school.

The format of the interview was semi-structured. Before the interviews, open-ended questions were set up to retrieve the information required (Appendix K). The questions centered around (1) the interviewee's teaching methodology of vocabulary, (2) the interviewee's perceptions and opinions towards the methodology they adopted, (3) interviewee's opinions on the traditional grammar-translation approach for vocabulary teaching and (4) interviewee's suggestions on students' development of vocabulary knowledge. In addition, the researcher would ask follow-up questions on any related issues raised on the spot. Each interview lasted for 20 minutes. All the interviews were audio-taped and transcribed. Please refer to Appendix L for the interview questions.

## **3.5 Experimental Procedure**

### **3.5.1 Design of lesson plans**

The lesson plans were developed three months before the implementation of the program. During the development of the lesson plans, efforts were made to ensure that the teaching methodologies adopted for the experimental and control groups were identical to the methodologies under study.

After the preliminary lesson plans were developed, they were commented on by two experienced English teachers with respect to the appropriateness and difficulty level for secondary one students. Afterwards, revisions were made based on the comments.

### **3.5.2 Administering the briefing sessions for team leaders**

As mentioned in 3.3.4, three outings were included in the experimental procedure for the experimental group. Three briefing sessions were held one day before each trip. The three team leaders (in which one was the researcher) were briefed on the roles they played during the outings. They were told in the briefing sessions the aim of the current study, the treatment received by the experimental group, the goals for the outings and their responsibilities during each outing. Most importantly, they were instructed on the ways to write field notes to collect data concerning subjects' learning behavior. As the field notes served an important function in depicting what happened during the outings, the team leaders were asked to pay special attention to the following areas:

- Subjects' attitudes during the collection of vocabulary, and



- Subjects' behavior in collecting vocabulary

It was believed that the briefing sessions would enable a smooth implementation of the experimental procedure and increase the validity and reliability of the data collected from the field notes. For the information about the briefing sessions, please refer to Appendix M.

### **3.5.3 Administering the pre-program test on vocabulary**

As discussed in 3.4.1, since the subjects were not allowed to be randomly assigned, certain measures needed to be taken in order to confirm that the vocabulary knowledge of the two groups was similar. For this purpose, a pre-program test on vocabulary was administered on both groups one day before the program. This test also served as an indication of subjects' level of vocabulary before they received the treatment. After the test, all the question papers were collected and no discussion was made on the answers. Furthermore, subjects were not told there would be post-tests after the program.

### **3.5.4 Implementation of the vocabulary acquisition program**

The vocabulary acquisition program was conducted between September and October when the school term had just begun. It was believed that students would have less pressure from homework, tests or examination during this period.

The program lasted for seven consecutive Saturday mornings and each lesson was about two hours. School days were not chosen as students' learning behavior might be affected by fatigue after a whole day of classes. Therefore, Saturday morning was an appropriate choice in which students could receive the treatment under a more relaxed physical and psychological state. The subjects were chosen and nominated by the school authority to participate in the study.

#### **3.5.5 Administering the post-program questionnaire**

In order to supplement the quantitative data collected from the pre-, post- and second post-tests, a post-program questionnaire was administered on both groups on the last day of the program.

Before subjects were asked to express their opinions on the questionnaire, the researchers went through the three sections with the subjects in order to ensure that they totally understood the items and the open-ended questions. In addition, they were told to raise questions when they had any queries about the questionnaire. The subjects were given thirty minutes to complete the questionnaire.

#### **3.5.6 Administering the post-program test on vocabulary**

In order to examine if the treatment received by the experimental and control groups brought any significant difference in subjects' vocabulary knowledge, a post-program test on vocabulary was administered two days after the program. The test items



were identical to those in the pre-test except that the order of them had been randomized. It was believed that a time-lapse of about two months was sufficient to allow the re-use of test items.

### **3.5.7 Conducting the post-program semi-structured interview with subjects**

Twenty post-program interviews were conducted with sub-samples of subjects in the experimental and control groups in November. All the interviews were audio-taped.

The questionnaire served as the basis for the selection of interviewees. After the questionnaire was administered, the researcher chose the interviewees by going through the questionnaire. The interviewees were selected as their opinions given in the questionnaire were believed to be worthy for further exploration.

### **3.5.8 Administering the second post-program test on vocabulary**

A second post-program test was administered forty-five days after the program to investigate the retention of vocabulary of the subjects after the program.

## **3.6 Methods of Data Analysis**

In the current study, most of the data was quantitatively collected from the pre-, post- and second post-program tests on vocabulary. In addition, qualitative data was also obtained to supplement the quantitative data gained from the three tests.

The SPSS program (Version 10.0) was employed to analyze the statistical data. Descriptive statistics of the results such as the mean and standard deviation were first conducted for the pre-, post- and second post-tests. “Independent samples *t*-tests,” “paired-samples *t*-tests” and “one-way ANOVA” were then performed to determine the significance level of the results. A non-directional, two-tailed significance value was adopted and was set at 0.05 level.

### **3.6.1 Pre-, post-, and second post-program tests on vocabulary**

In order to examine if there was significant difference between the vocabulary competence of the experimental and control groups on the selected categories, the “independent samples *t*-test” was used to analyze the test scores. A significance value above 0.05 would show that there was no significant difference between the vocabulary knowledge of the two groups.

The “independent samples *t*-test” was adopted to analyze the scores gained by the subjects in the post-test. A significance value below 0.05 would indicate that the different treatment had brought a significant difference between the performance of the two groups after the program.

The “paired samples *t*-test” was used to examine if there was any within group significant improvement in subjects’ vocabulary knowledge before and after the treatment. A significance value below 0.05 would depict that both groups gained significant improvement in their vocabulary knowledge after the program.



The “one-way ANOVA” was adopted to compare the performance of the two groups in the pre- and post-tests.

The “independent samples *t*-test” was conducted to analyze the scores in the second post-test. A significance value below 0.05 would show that the different methodologies had brought significant difference in subjects’ retention of vocabulary.

### **3.6.2 Post-program questionnaire**

The frequency distribution of subjects’ opinions towards the current methodology of vocabulary teaching and the VSS was calculated. The mean, mode and standard deviation were derived from each of the items in the questionnaire. For the open-ended questions, they were reviewed by the present researcher for possible area for further exploration and discussion.

### **3.6.3 Post-program semi-structured interview**

Subjects’ reflection on the current methodology of vocabulary teaching, the VSS and opinions towards vocabulary acquisition were audio-taped and transcribed. All the interviews were reviewed and analyzed by the researcher for valuable areas for investigation.

### **3.6.4 The researcher's and team leaders' field notes**

All the field notes for the three outings were collected and reviewed by the researcher. Special attention was paid to subjects' attitudes and behavior during the process of vocabulary self-collection.

## **3.7 Summary of Chapter 3**

This chapter depicts, in detail, the design, the instrument and the data collection procedures of the study.

First, the selection and background information of the subjects are described.

Second, the vocabulary acquisition program was introduced; this is followed by a detailed description of the teaching methodologies adopted for the study.

Next, the construction of research instruments are explained: the pre-, post- and second post-program tests on vocabulary, the post-program questionnaire, the post-program interview with subjects, the researcher's and team leaders' field notes, and the interview with English teachers.

Finally, the procedure and method of data analysis is performed.



## Chapter 4

# FINDINGS

This chapter reports on the quantitative and qualitative data collected through the various research instruments. The quantitative data presented includes data obtained from the pre-, 1<sup>st</sup> post- and 2<sup>nd</sup> post-tests on vocabulary and the post-program questionnaire. For the qualitative data, it includes data collected from the post-program questionnaire; semi-structured interview; researcher's and team leaders' field notes and interviews with English teachers. The four research hypotheses (listed below) are tested.

**Hypothesis 1:** Chinese EFL learners will be able to acquire vocabulary by the VSS.

**Hypothesis 1 (Ho):** Chinese EFL learners will not be able to acquire vocabulary by the VSS.

**Hypothesis 2:** VSS will be a better means than the current methodology of vocabulary teaching for foreign language vocabulary acquisition.

**Hypothesis 2 (Ho):** VSS will not be a better means than the current methodology of vocabulary teaching for foreign language vocabulary acquisition.

**Hypothesis 3:** VSS will be more effective for the retention of vocabulary than the current methodology for vocabulary teaching.

**Hypothesis 3 (Ho):** VSS will not be more effective for the retention of vocabulary than the current methodology for vocabulary teaching.

**Hypothesis 4:** Learners will be more motivated to acquire vocabulary by VSS.

**Hypothesis 4 (Ho):** Learners will not be more motivated to acquire vocabulary by VSS.

The statistical analysis upholds the first three hypotheses and the fourth hypothesis is rejected by the analysis of the qualitative data. A more detailed discussion of the hypotheses will be included in Chapter 5.

**4.1 Vocabulary knowledge of the experimental and control groups before the treatment**

As discussed in 3.4.1, a pre-program test on vocabulary was administered on both the experimental and control groups one day before the program in order to measure the vocabulary knowledge of the subjects before they received the treatment. In addition, the test also indicated if the subjects in the two groups possessed a similar level of vocabulary knowledge in the selected categories before the program. A total of 39 subjects in each group took the pre-test on vocabulary respectively. The results are presented in Table 6.

**Table 6. Subjects’ score in the pre-program test on vocabulary**

Group	N	Mean	Standard deviation	Standard error mean
Experimental	39	36.615	6.364	1.019
Control	39	35.333	5.560	0.890

Maximum score:63

From Table 6, it can be seen that the experimental group gained a mean score of 36.615 out of a total of 63. For the control group, the mean score was 35.333. The difference in mean score between the experimental and control groups was 1.282. In order to examine



if the difference in mean score was statistically significant, an independent samples t-test was performed.

**Table 7. Results of independent samples t-test (pre-test)**

	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	Sig. (2-tailed)
Pretest	.947	76	.346

As shown in Table 7, the significant value (2-tailed) was 0.346 which was above the 0.05 significant level. As a result, the *t*-test revealed that there was no significant difference between the vocabulary knowledge of the experimental and control groups before the program. Although the subjects could not be randomly assigned, the t-test proved that the subjects in both groups possessed a similar level of vocabulary knowledge before they received the treatment.

**4.2 The effects of the Vocabulary Self-collection Strategy (VSS) and the current methodology of vocabulary teaching on subjects' acquisition of vocabulary**

A first post-program test was administered on both the experimental and control groups in order to determine the effects of VSS and the current methodology of vocabulary teaching on subjects' acquisition of vocabulary. The effect was measured by the gain in the mean score in the post-test.

#### **4.2.1 Vocabulary knowledge of the experimental and control groups after the treatment**

Table 8 presents the mean score of the experimental and control groups in the first post-test on vocabulary.

**Table 8. Subjects' score in the 1<sup>st</sup> post-program test on vocabulary**

Group	<i>N</i>	Mean	Standard deviation	Standard error mean
Experimental	39	43.744	6.954	1.114
Control	39	42.308	5.709	0.914

Maximum score: 63

As can be seen from Table 8, the mean score gained by the experimental group was 43.744 out of 63 whereas the control group gained a mean score of 42.308. The difference in mean score of the two groups was 1.436. In order to examine if the different treatment received by the two groups (i.e. the VSS for the experimental group and the current methodology of vocabulary teaching for the control group) had brought a significant difference between the vocabulary knowledge of the two groups after the program, an independent samples t-test was performed. The results are summarized by the Table 9:

**Table 9. Results of independent samples t-test (1<sup>st</sup> post-test)**

	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	Sig. (2-tailed)
1 <sup>st</sup> Post- test	.997	76	.322

The statistical test revealed that the significant value was 0.322 which was higher than the 0.05 significant level. It showed that the different treatment received by the two



groups had not brought any significant difference to subjects' vocabulary knowledge after the program. As a result, Hypothesis 2 is rejected.

The one-way ANOVA was performed on the pre-test and 1<sup>st</sup> post-test. The results of the ANOVA confirmed the same results as the independent-samples t-tests. For the pre-test, the ANOVA showed that the difference between the performance of the two groups before the treatment was not significant as the significant value was 0.346. the ANOVA also revealed that there was no significant difference in subjects' vocabulary knowledge in the 1<sup>st</sup> post-test. The significant value was 0.322. the two significant values calculated by the ANOVA (i.e., 0.346 for the pre-test and 0.322 for the 1<sup>st</sup> post-test) confirmed the results given by the two independent-samples t-tests. For the results of the ANOVA, please refer to Table 10.

**Table 10. Statistical analysis by one-way ANOVA (pre- and 1<sup>st</sup> post-tests)**

		Sum of Squares	<i>df</i>	Mean Square	<i>F</i>	Sig.
<b>Pre-test</b>	Between Groups	32.051	1	32.051	.898	.346
	Within Groups	2713.897	76	35.709		
	Total	2745.949	77			
<b>1st Post-test</b>	Between Groups	40.205	1	40.205	.993	.322
	Within Groups	3075.744	76	40.470		
	Total	3115.949	77			

#### **4.2.2. The effect of the Vocabulary Self-collection Strategy (VSS) on the acquisition of vocabulary by the experimental group**

Although there existed no significant difference between the performance of the experimental and control groups in the first post-test, a paired samples *t*-test was adopted to examine if there was any within group significant improvement in subjects' vocabulary knowledge after they received the treatment. Table 11 presents a comparison of the mean scores gained by the experimental group in the pre- and 1<sup>st</sup> post-tests.

**Table 11. A comparison of mean scores gained by the experimental group in the pre- and 1<sup>st</sup> post-test**

Group	Test	Mean	Paired difference mean	Paired samples <i>t</i> -test (2-tailed)
Experimental	Pre-test	36.615	7.129	.000
	1 <sup>st</sup> Post-test	43.744		
Maximum score: 63				

As can be seen from Table 11, the experimental group gained a mean score of 36.615 in the pre-test and made a great improvement of 7.129 marks resulting in a mean score of 43.744 in the 1<sup>st</sup> post-test. The paired samples *t*-test was performed and the result revealed that the difference in mean score was statistically significant (i.e.,  $p < 0.05$ ). As a result, it implies that the treatment received by the experimental group (i.e. the Vocabulary Self-collection Strategy) did bring a significant improvement in their vocabulary knowledge after the program. Furthermore, it showed that Chinese EFL learners could acquire vocabulary by the Vocabulary Self-collection Strategy (VSS). From the experimental subjects' performance in the 1<sup>st</sup> post-test, hypothesis 1 is upheld.



#### **4.2.3. The effect of the current methodology of vocabulary teaching on the acquisition of vocabulary by the control group**

A paired samples t-test was performed so as to determine if the treatment received by the control group (i.e., the current methodology of vocabulary teaching) had brought a significant improvement in their vocabulary knowledge after the program. The mean score gained by the control in the pre- and 1<sup>st</sup> post-tests and the result of the paired samples t-test are summarized in Table 12.

**Table 12. A comparison of mean scores gained by the control group in the pre- and 1<sup>st</sup> post-test**

Group	Test	Mean	Paired difference mean	Paired samples <i>t</i> -test (2-tailed)
Control	Pre-test	35.333	6.975	.000
	1 <sup>st</sup> Post-test	42.308		
Maximum score: 63				

As shown in Table 12, the improvement in mean score made by the control group was 6.975 which was slightly less than the mean difference 7.219 of the experimental group (cf. Table 5). However, the paired samples t-test confirmed that the difference in mean within the control group was also statistically significant. In other words, the treatment received by the control group had also brought a significant improvement in subjects' vocabulary knowledge after the program but the improvement was shown to be slightly less prominent when compared with the improvement made by the experimental group.

### 4.3 The effects of the Vocabulary Self-collection Strategy (VSS) and the current methodology of vocabulary teaching on subjects' retention of vocabulary

As one of the research aims is to examine subjects' retention of vocabulary under the two different methodologies (i.e., the VSS and the current methodology of vocabulary teaching), a second post-test was administered forty-five days after the program.

#### 4.3.1 The retention of vocabulary by the experimental group

Table 13 presents the mean score gained by the experimental group in the second post-test as compared with their score in the first post-test.

**Table 13. A comparison of the mean scores gained by the experimental group in the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> post-tests**

Group	Test	Mean	Standard deviation	Standard error mean	Loss in mean
Experimental	1 <sup>st</sup> post	43.744	6.954	1.114	1
	2 <sup>nd</sup> post	42.744	6.348	1.017	

Maximum score: 63

From Table 13, it can be seen that the experimental group gained 42.744 in the 2<sup>nd</sup> post-test which was 1 mark less than their mean score in the 1<sup>st</sup> post-test.



#### **4.3.2 The retention of vocabulary by the control group**

For the control group, the retention of vocabulary was also measured by the score they gained in the 2<sup>nd</sup> post-test. Table 14 shows the performance of the control group in the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> post-tests.

**Table 14. A comparison of the mean scores gained by the control group in the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> post-tests**

Group	Test	Mean	Standard deviation	Standard error mean	Loss in mean
Control	1 <sup>st</sup> post	42.308	5.709	0.914	2.385
	2 <sup>nd</sup> post	39.923	5.049	0.809	

Maximum score: 63

From the table 14, it can be seen that on average, the control group gained a score of 39.923 in the 2<sup>nd</sup> post-test which was 2.385 mark less than what they gained in the 1<sup>st</sup> post-test. Numerically, the loss in mean score (i.e., 2.385) by the control group was more than twice of the loss by the experimental group (i.e., 1). In order to determine if the difference in the two groups' loss of mean score was significant, an independent samples *t*-test was performed, as reported below.

#### **4.3.3 A comparison of the retention of vocabulary by the experimental and control groups**

As one of the research questions was to investigate the retention of vocabulary under the two different pedagogical approaches, the loss in mean score of the two groups in the 2<sup>nd</sup> post-test was compared and an independent samples *t*-test was used to

determine if the difference was statistically significant. Table 9 summarizes the result of the t-test and the relevant data.

**Table 15. Independent samples t-test of the loss in mean score**

Group	Mean score in 1 <sup>st</sup> post-test	Mean score in 2 <sup>nd</sup> post-test	Loss in mean score	t-test (two-tailed)
Experimental	43.744	42.744	1.000	.033
Control	42.308	39.923	2.385	

Maximum score: 63

As can be seen from Table 15, the t-test confirmed that the loss in mean score of the two groups was significantly different as the significance value was 0.033 which was lower than the 0.05 significance level. As a result, Hypothesis 3 is upheld. The result of the t-test revealed that the different methodologies had brought significant difference in subjects’ retention of vocabulary. Furthermore, the retention of vocabulary by the experimental group was significantly better than the retention by the control group. In other words, the Vocabulary Self-collection Strategy was more effective for the retention of vocabulary than the current methodology of vocabulary teaching which prevails in HK EFL classrooms.

The results of the *t*-tests were confirmed by the One-way ANOVA. The ANOVA revealed that the different treatment received by the two groups had not brought any significant difference in their vocabulary knowledge after the program (*p*=0.322). However, the retention of vocabulary by experimental group was significantly better than the control group (*p*=0.033). Please refer to Table 16 for the results of the ANOVA.



**Table 16. Statistical analysis by one-way ANOVA (1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> post-tests)**

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
<b>1<sup>st</sup> Post-test</b>	Between Groups	40.205	1	40.205	.993	.322
	Within Groups	3075.744	76	40.470		
	Total	3115.949	77			
<b>2<sup>nd</sup> Post-test</b>	Between Groups	155.128	1	155.128	4.716	.033
	Within Groups	2500.205	76	32.897		
	Total	2655.333	77			

**4.4 Subjects’ perception of the current methodology of vocabulary teaching and the Vocabulary Self-collection Strategy (VSS) gained from the post-program questionnaire**

Apart from comparing the effectiveness of the current methodology of vocabulary teaching and the VSS on EFL learners’ acquisition of vocabulary, the present study also looks at learners’ perception of the two pedagogical approaches. For this purpose, a post-program questionnaire was administered on both the experimental and control groups (Appendices G and H). In this section, the quantitative data gained from part 2 and 3 of the questionnaire will be presented. These two parts included statements on the current methodology on vocabulary teaching and the VSS respectively. Subjects were asked to respond to those statements on a five-point scale from (1) *Strongly Agree* to (5) *Strongly Disagree*.

#### **4.4.1 Subjects' perception of the current methodology of vocabulary teaching**

Section 2 of the questionnaire included ten statements on the current methodology of vocabulary teaching, and subjects in both the experimental and control groups were asked to respond to those statements according to their perception. Please refer to Appendices F and G for the questionnaire.

Concerning the use of L1 translation in the explanation of word meaning, 51.3% of the subjects in both the experimental and control groups strongly agreed that they could learn better through the word by word translation method.

When using synonyms to explain word meaning, 76.4% of the subjects in the experimental group and 61.4% of the subjects in the control group either agreed or strongly agreed that they could learn a wide range of words by the synonym-explanation method. However, only 58.9% of the experimental subjects agreed or strongly agreed that they were motivated to learn new words by this method. On the contrary, 66.6% of the control held the same opinion. Concerning the effectiveness of the synonym approach in word acquisition, 79.5% of the experimental and 63.3% of the control subjects agreed or strongly agreed that the approach was helpful for them to acquire a lot of new words.

As the current methodology of vocabulary teaching always requires learners to memorize the definitions of words, two statements were designed to examine subjects' opinions on this issue. When asked if the subjects felt it comfortable to memorize the definitions of different words, it was found that opinions varied widely. 41% of the experimental subjects were neutral to the statement whereas 30.8% of them either



disagreed or strongly disagreed and 28.2% agreed or strongly agreed with the statement. For the control group, most of the subjects (43.6%) were also neutral to the statement. However, only 23.1% held negative attitude towards the statement. The remaining 33.3% were positive towards the statement.

Concerning the amount of words subjects could learn by memorizing the word definitions, the majority of the experimental (43.6%) and the control (61.5%) groups did not think they could learn a lot of words by simply memorizing their definitions.

With regards to the teaching material – comprehension passages, nearly four-fifths (79.5%) of the experimental subjects showed preference or strong preference to the adoption of comprehension passages as the teaching materials whereas only less than three-fifths (56.4%) of the control held the same opinion.

For the development of independent word learning skills, subjects in the experimental and control groups held opposite opinions. 38.5% of the experimental group did not think that their independent word learning skills could be developed if the word definitions were given by teachers. On the contrary, only 6 subjects (15.4%) in the control group had the same opinion. However, nearly half of them (46.2%) perceived the current methodology of vocabulary helpful in the development of their independent word learning skills.

#### **4.4.2 Subjects' perception of the Vocabulary Self-collection Strategy (VSS)**

Section 3 of the questionnaire included eight statements on the VSS and this section appeared only in the version for the experimental group as VSS was the treatment they received during the program. Similar to section 2, the experimental group was asked to rank the statements on a five-point scale.

Concerning the general perception of the subjects towards VSS, 56.4% of them claimed that they learned better through the VSS. About half of the subjects (51.3%) enjoyed learning new words by the process of self-collection. Furthermore, 71.2% of the subjects either agreed or strongly agreed that they were motivated to learn new words by VSS.

With regards to the scope of words they could acquire by VSS, 71.8% of the subjects believed they could learn a wide range of words by VSS. In addition, thirty subjects which made up 76.9% of the total found the VSS helpful for them to acquire new words.

As discussed in 2.10.3, VSS has the potential not only to increase learners' word awareness, but also their strategic abilities for independent word learning. In order to confirm these, two statements were included to obtain subjects' opinions on the potential power of VSS. Twenty-four out of the thirty-nine subjects (61.5%) agreed or strongly agreed that VSS helped to develop their independent word learning skills. Furthermore, nearly four-fifths (79.5%) of the subjects claimed that their sensitivity towards words in their surrounding environment was enhanced by VSS.



#### **4.5 A brief summary of the quantitative results**

From the pre, 1<sup>st</sup> post- and 2<sup>nd</sup> post-tests, it was found that although there existed no significant difference in the vocabulary knowledge of the experimental and control groups, the retention of vocabulary by the experimental group was significantly better than the control group. One preliminary conclusion can be made here is that the Vocabulary Self-collection Strategy (VSS) is equally effective as the current methodology of vocabulary teaching. In addition, VSS is more effective for the retention of vocabulary than the current methodology of vocabulary teaching.

#### **4.6 Qualitative data collected from the post-program questionnaire, post-program semi-structured interviews, researchers' and team leaders' field-notes and interviews with English teachers**

In the present research, apart from quantitative data, qualitative data was also collected through various instruments for triangulation. The sections follow will present the qualitative data obtained from the different instruments. All the original responses were in Chinese in order to gain more valid data. They were then translated by the researcher.

#### **4.6.1 The post program questionnaire**

As mentioned in 4.5, 4.5.1 and 4.5.2 had presented only the quantitative data gained from Sections 2 and 3 of the questionnaire. In this section, the open-ended questions from which the qualitative data obtained will be presented.

##### **4.6.1.1 Opinions towards the current methodology of vocabulary teaching**

From the data of the questionnaire, it was found that subjects held both positive and negative opinions towards the current methodology of vocabulary teaching. The positive comments are divided into different categories and summarized in Table 17.

**Table 17. Positive opinions on the current methodology of vocabulary teaching (N=78)**

<b>Category discussed</b>	<b>Number of occurrence</b>
• Lots of new words could be learned	11 (14.1%)
• The use of L1 (i.e., Chinese) made word learning easier	8 (10.3%)
• Repetition enhanced deeper impression of words	10 (12.8%)
• An interesting word-learning approach	5 (6.4%)

As can be seen from Table 17, those subjects who held positive opinions had practical reasons, i.e., the approach could help them acquire words. However, only 6.4% of the subjects perceived the approach to be interesting.



It appears that most subjects were dissatisfied with the current methodology of vocabulary teaching. Their negative comments are categorized in Table 18.

**Table 18. Negative opinions on the current methodology of vocabulary teaching (N=78)**

Category discussed	Number of occurrence
• The approach was boring and monotonous	38 (48.7%)
• Only rote memorization was required	20 (25.6%)
• The words learned were not relevant to learners' experience and not applicable to their daily lives	8 (10.3%)

From Table 18, it is obvious that nearly 50% of the subjects expressed their dissatisfaction with the current methodology of vocabulary teaching as the approach was found to be boring and monotonous. In addition, 25.6% of the subjects claimed that word learning from this approach appeared only to be rote learning and memorization. Furthermore, eight of the subjects stated that the words learned were irrelevant to their personal experience and inapplicable to their daily lives.

Apart from the negative comments captured in Table 11, there were some other comments which were worth further investigation. For instance, one of the subjects gave the following response:

“Although we can learn a lot of words by this approach (i.e. the current methodology of vocabulary teaching), **we can also get the definitions of words by looking them up in the dictionary ourselves instead.** Then, what’s the point of having a teacher if she only tells us the definitions of words?”

From this excerpt, it is obvious that the subjects were discontented with the approach as teachers are always only the “definition providers.”

One subject also pointed out one of the constraints of the approach:

**“When adopting the current approach, teachers always teach us only the words appearing in the textbooks but seldom teach us other words.”**

The comment revealed that the scope of words that can be learned under the current approach is always confined by the textbooks prescribed by the school authority.

Two subjects complained about the use of L1 (i.e., Cantonese) in the explanation of word meaning.

**“As we are learning English, therefore I think English instead of Chinese (i.e. Cantonese) should be used to explain word meaning.”**

**“There is too much Chinese (i.e., Cantonese), it will not help but, on the contrary, retard our English learning.”**

All the positive and negative comments will be discussed in greater details in Chapter 5.

#### 4.6.1.2 Opinions towards the Vocabulary Self-collection Strategy (VSS)

The majority of the experimental subjects were in favour of the VSS. The main reasons are listed in the Table 19.



**Table 19. Positive opinions on VSS (N=39)**

Category discussed	Number of occurrence
• VSS helped to develop my independent word learning skills	19 (48.7%)
• VSS made me more sensitive towards the words around me	15 (38.5%)
• Words of different types could be learned	11(28.2%)
• VSS was very interesting	9 (23.1%)
• The process of vocabulary self-collection led to deeper impression of words	7 (17.9%)

From Table 19, it is obvious that nearly half of the subjects in the experimental group commented that VSS was helpful in their development of independent word learning skills. Fifteen of the subjects (38.5%) believed that VSS had raised their awareness towards words. 28.2% of them claimed that different types of words could be learned through VSS. In addition, 17.9% thought that they could have deeper impression of the words by collecting and learning the words themselves. Nine of the subjects (23.1%) thought that learning words by VSS was interesting.

Apart from the comments listed in Table 12, the subjects also had some insightful opinions.

“VSS lets me understand that **we can learn words anywhere and anytime.**”

“After being introduced VSS, I start to **pay more attention to the words in my surrounding environment** which I had never noticed before.”

“There is **no restriction and constraint** on the amount and types of words I can learn from VSS.”

Although most subjects were positive towards VSS, three of the subjects expressed their dissatisfaction with VSS. One of the subjects commented that VSS only allowed him to understand the meaning of words; however, he could not learn how to pronounce the words by collecting them himself. Two subjects claimed that using VSS was very time-consuming and inconvenient as they had to visit the supermarket or fast food shop in order to collect the words during the program.

These comments given by the subjects will be discussed in Chapter 5 in more detail.

4.6.1.3 The characteristics of an effective approach for EFL vocabulary acquisition

Subjects in both the experimental and control groups were invited to express their opinions on the characteristics of an effective approach for EFL vocabulary acquisition. The results of the findings are summarized in Table 20.

**Table 20. Characteristics of an effective approach for EFL vocabulary acquisition (N=78)**

Category discussed	Number of occurrence
• The approach should be interesting	32 (41.0%)
• More L1 (i.e. Chinese) should be used for the explanation of word meaning	17 (21.8%)
• Only English should be used for the explanation of word meaning	10 (12.8%)
• Word meaning should be explained in terms of synonyms	9 (11.5%)



The majority of the subjects (41%) claimed that in order to make word learning more effective, the teaching approach should be interesting. Concerning the language used for explaining word meaning, 12.8% believed that only English should be used whereas 21.8% asked for more L1 (i.e., Chinese). Nine of the respondents (11.5%) agreed with the use of synonyms for word explanation.

It is interesting to find that responses like the following was common:

**“Games should be included when teaching words.”**

**“An effective approach for word teaching should be interactive.”**

In addition, some of the subjects saw the importance of learners’ role in the process of word acquisition.

**“We should take the initiative to learn words but not always spoon-fed by the teachers.”**

**“Teachers should let students know that they can learn words on their own and help to raise students’ word sensitivity.”**

The above comments echoed with the rationale of the Vocabulary Self-collection Strategy (VSS) and will be further explored in Chapter 5.

#### **4.6.2 The post-program semi-structured interview**

As mentioned in 3.5.3, interviews were conducted with subjects from the experimental and control groups. Questions were designed to gain information about the current methodology of vocabulary teaching in HK EFL classrooms, subjects’ attitudes towards the grammar-translation approach for vocabulary teaching, subjects’ perception

of the vocabulary acquisition workshop, their opinions on an effective approach for vocabulary teaching and their difficulties in vocabulary learning. For the experimental group, extra questions were asked to obtain their opinions on the Vocabulary Self-collection Strategy (VSS). The interviews were conducted in Cantonese and were translated and transcribed by the researcher. For the transcription of the interviews, please refer to Appendices N and O.

#### 4.6.2.1 Characteristics and comments on the current methodology of vocabulary teaching

Concerning the ways vocabulary was taught to the subjects in their English language learning experience, i.e., the current methodology of vocabulary teaching, most interviewees described it as follows.

With regards to the teaching materials, 18 interviewees (90%) claimed that they were always taught the vocabulary in the comprehension passages from the textbooks. Teachers would usually pick up the words that they perceived to be difficult in the comprehension passages. Some teachers would ask students to look up the words in the dictionary. However, most teachers would provide the meaning of the words to students. When introducing new vocabulary items, teachers would ask the students to underline the words in the comprehension passage or have the word written on the blackboard. Afterwards, they would provide the pronunciation of the words to students and ask them to repeat the words several times. Then, the teachers would explain the word meaning.



From the interviews, it was found that most teachers would require students to pronounce the words several times until they were familiar with the pronunciation. Ninety percent of the interviewees stated that repetition of the pronunciation of words was a common practice in their vocabulary learning experience.

The interviewees were asked the language used when the teachers explained the meaning of words. It was found that no teacher solely used English to explain word meaning. However, 35% of the interviewees stated that only Chinese was used. Twenty percent claimed that their teachers mostly used English but Chinese would be used if students had difficulties in understanding. Forty percent replied that both English and Chinese were used when teachers explained the meaning of words.

When asked to express their opinions on the current methodology of vocabulary teaching, subjects held both positive and negative opinions. Some of the interviewees reflected that the approach was boring and monotonous. It was not able to capture their interest in learning vocabulary. The following were some of the comments given by the interviewees.

“(The approach was) good but quite **monotonous** since the meanings are readily provided by teachers.” [C7]

“It’s just **rote memorization**, we’ll not remember the words.” [C5]

One of the subjects complained about the extensive use of Chinese during the explanation of word meaning.

“**English instead of Chinese** should be used to explain the meanings of words.” [E2]

Another subject saw the role of self-learning in vocabulary acquisition. He commented:

**"It's very hard to remember the meaning of words. If we look up the meanings of the words ourselves, it's easier for us to remember."** [E6]

Some subjects believed that the approach allowed them easy understanding of word meaning.

**"It lets us easy to understand."** [E5]

**"It's easy to remember (the meaning of words)."** [E8]

Concerning repetition, an interviewee had the following opinion:

**"We can be more familiar with the pronunciation."** [E9]

Although some subjects did not welcome the repetition of pronunciation during vocabulary, there was also a role for repetition to play in the word learning process. As a result of frequent repetition, learners might have a deeper impression of the pronunciation which was an important component in the word acquisition process.

#### 4.6.2.2 Opinions on the grammar-translation approach for the teaching of vocabulary

During the interviews, subjects were also being introduced the traditional grammar-translation approach for vocabulary teaching which resembled the ways they were taught. Afterwards, they were asked to comment on the approach.



Eight out of the 20 interviewees (40%) thought that the approach was boring and tedious. The followings are some of the comments:

**"It's only read and listen."** [C7]

**"It's very troublesome** since we have to repeat the words several times even though some students always know the pronunciation." [E5]

Two of the interviewees criticized that the approach was too mechanical.

**"It's just rote memorization,** we'll not remember the words." [C5]

**"Students may not fully understand. It's just rote learning."** [C9]

The reliance on teachers for the provision of word meaning was also blamed by one of the subjects.

**"If all the things are readily provided by teachers, we will easily forget the words.** It's better for us to learn the meanings ourselves." [C4]

An interview criticized the use of L1 (i.e., Chinese) for the explanation of word meaning. He claimed that L1 might not always be able to fully capture the original word meaning in English.

**"However, using Chinese to explain meaning may cause misunderstanding.** For instance, I may mix up the meanings of the words 'hit' and 'hurt'." [E2]

Some of the subjects reflected that the grammar-translation approach would not let them understand the usage of words. The following are some of the comments:

**"When it comes to the usages of words, we may not be able to use them appropriately."** [C10]

**"It's difficult to put the words into application."** [E1]

When being asked if the grammar-translation approach could help them learn a lot of words, 65% of the subjects did not think that a lot of words could be learned. They claimed that the words learned would be easily forgotten.

**"If all the things are readily provided by teachers, we will easily forget the words. It's better for us to learn the meaning ourselves."** [C4]

**"..... I may forget some of the words."** [C4]

**"It doesn't give us a deep impression of the words."** [C5]

Having explained the nature of the grammar-translation approach, the interviewees were asked if the approach would nurture their development of autonomous word learning skills. Fifteen out of the twenty interviewees (75%) believed that the approach would not help develop their independent word learning abilities. The following excerpt illustrates the common reason behind their opinions:

**"..... since all the things, the meanings of the words are readily provided by teachers."** [C9]

Although there existed a lot of criticisms against the grammar-translation approach, it also had its strengths. Four subjects praised the power of this approach for the learning of pronunciation.

**"It can increase our understanding of the meanings of words and their pronunciation."** [C3]

**"..... repeating the words several times may help us learn the pronunciation."** [E6]

**"Concerning the advantages, sometimes we can remember the pronunciation."** [E7]

**"We can be more familiar with ..... with the pronunciation."** [E9]



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**"..... I may forget some of the words."** [C4]

**"It doesn't give us a deep impression of the words."** [C5]

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**"It can increase our understanding of the meanings of words and their pronunciation."** [C3]

**"..... repeating the words several times may help us learn the pronunciation."** [E6]

**"Concerning the advantages, sometimes we can remember the pronunciation."** [E7]

**"We can be more familiar with ..... with the pronunciation."** [E9]

#### 4.6.2.3 Comments on the vocabulary acquisition workshop

Apart from commenting on the current methodology of vocabulary teaching and the grammar-translation approach for the teaching of vocabulary, subjects from the experimental and control groups were also invited to express their view on the vocabulary acquisition workshop they attended. For the control subjects, the workshop they attended adopted the current methodology of vocabulary teaching whereas the Vocabulary Self-collection Strategy (VSS) was the teaching methodology for the workshop prepared for the experimental group.

It was commonly found that the workshop for the control group could not capture subjects' interest in vocabulary learning. 3 out of the 10 interviewees from the control group claimed that the workshop was boring. One of the subjects explained that this could be attributed to the use of comprehension passages as teaching materials [C1]. Another subject thought that the workshop was boring as it was similar to the ways they were taught [C8]. The workshop was also being labeled as boring for the limited area of English learning it could cover. One subject wrote:

**"..... only vocabulary was taught but nothing else."** [C10]

Another subject criticized that only a few varieties of words were taught in the workshop.

**"It didn't cover a lot of varieties of words."** [C5]

While there was dissatisfaction with the limited varieties of words being introduced, a subject complained about the large amount of words they had to learn.



**“Too much words** were taught each time.” [C6]

Apart from the above negative comments, some of the control subjects also praised the workshop. One interviewee was able to point out the teaching methodology adopted for the workshop. In addition, he held a positive attitude towards the approach.

**“ ..... it’s a combination of the traditional approach and some interactive methods.”** [C7]

Another subjects thought that the workshop was good because of the use of L1 (i.e. Chinese) in the explanation of word meaning.

**“There was Chinese-English translation.”** [C2]

For the experimental workshop in which VSS was adopted as the teaching methodology, most of the comments received were very positive.

The majority of the subjects claimed that the workshop enabled them to understand that they could learn words on their own without the guidance of teachers.

**“I learn how to collect words on my own.”** [E4]

**“We could learn words on our own** and then you would teach us the pronunciation in the follow-up activities.” [E5]

**“I understand how to learn words ..... , there are some ways to learn words.”** [E6]

**“It lets us learn words by ourselves ..... It lets us know how to learn words on our own.”** [E10]

The subjects also expressed their view on the types and amount of words they could learn through the workshop.

**“I can learn a lot of words related to our daily lives.”** [E1]

**“I can learn different types of words around me.”** [E4]

An interviewee stated that the word meaning was more vivid through the process of vocabulary self-collection. As a result, a deeper impression of words could be retained.

"I can see **the real objects** when I collect the words." [E5]

The workshop also succeeded in changing the word learning behavior of the subjects. This can be proved by the following excerpts:

"I'll try to find some words to learn." [E3]

"I am more aware of the words around me." [E5]

Only one negative comment was received, it concerned the limited scope of words that they could learn in the workshop.

"I think the **range of words introduced** can be broadened." [E9]

Each interviewee was asked if the workshop had changed the way they learn vocabulary. It was encouraging to find that all of them claimed that their vocabulary learning behavior was changed in different ways.

Five of the respondents claimed that their word sensitivity was raised after the workshop.

"For instance, when I go to **supermarket**. I am now **more sensitive to the names of the things** sold there. I look at their spellings and try to remember their meanings." [E4]

"I am **more sensitive to the words around me**." [E9]



The workshop was also helpful in the development of subjects' independent word learning skills. Some subjects reflected that they would start to take the initiative in word learning.

**"I'll try to find some words to learn ..... I know that there are some ways to learn words on our own."** [E3]

**"In the past, I learned words from textbooks but now I collect words on my own. I can have a deeper impression of the words I collected."** [E5]

The subjects were further asked if the workshop had raised their word sensitivity and helped the development of independent word learning skills. All the subjects responded that they were more sensitive towards words around them after the program and all of them believed that VSS would help their development of independent word learning abilities.

Subjects also cited instances when they adopted VSS to learn words. The followings are some examples:

**"When I had buffets ..... The names of the dishes."** [E2]

**"When I went to the supermarket to buy something for my mother. I paid attention to the words there."** [E5]

**"For instance, when I had dinner in restaurants, I would pay attention to the words in the menus and try to remember them."** [E7]

From the qualitative data presented in 4.6.2.3 and 4.6.2.4, we can confirm that subjects were motivated to acquire vocabulary by the Vocabulary Self-collection Strategy (VSS). As a result, Hypothesis 4 is upheld.

#### 4.6.2.4 Opinions on an effective approach for EFL vocabulary acquisition

When asked what, in their opinion, are the characteristics of an effective approach for vocabulary teaching, 10 out of the 20 interviewees claimed that it should be interesting and interactive. In addition, more games and activities should be included.

“There should be some **games**, or **competitions**.” [C1]

“It should be more **interactive**.” [C2]

“There should be **more activities** which can let us learn words.” [C9]

“It should be **interesting** and **games** should be included so that we can learn words.” [E2]

“It **shouldn’t bore the students**. It should be interesting.” [E5]

“It should be **interesting**.” [E8]

Various opinions were found concerning the language used for the explanation of word meaning. Some interviewees asked for more Chinese while some demanded a combination of English and Chinese.

“Teachers should **use more Chinese** so that it’s easier for students to understand.” [E4]

“**Both English and Chinese** should be used to explain words.” [C1]

“**More Chinese** should be used ..... we can’t understand if English is used.” [C9]

However, only one respondent believed that English should be used as the only language for word-meaning explanation.

“First of all, it should let students understand the meanings of words and **English explanation should be given**.” [E4]



Some of the subjects saw the role of learners in vocabulary learning. They believed that self-learning was very important in the process of word acquisition. One of them stated:

**“Teachers should ask us to look up the meanings of words ourselves instead of providing us with the meanings, so we can have a deeper impression.” [C6]**

One of the experimental subjects believed that consciousness-raising was vital for vocabulary learning. He suggested the following:

**“There should be some activities to raise our consciousness towards the words around us so that we can learn more English vocabulary.” [E1]**

#### *4.6.2.5 Perceived difficulties in vocabulary learning*

The interviewees were asked to state the difficulties they encountered in learning vocabulary. From the responses, it was found that spelling and pronunciation were their greatest difficulty in word learning. Ten of the interviewees (50%) claimed that it is difficult to remember the spelling of words where 8 of them had problems in pronunciation.

Some of the subjects (40%) also came across with problems in understanding the meaning of words, especially those words with multiple meanings.

Five interviewees encountered difficulties in the usage of words. They had problems in putting the words they had learned into real application.

One subject perceived the differences between English and Chinese as his greatest problem in vocabulary learning. His explanation is quoted below:

“The meaning of English sentences sometimes cannot be fully explained by Chinese.” [E6]

In fact, this is also one of the criticisms of the use of translation in the explanation of word meaning.

#### **4.6.3 The researchers' and team leaders' field-notes**

It was mentioned earlier in 3.5.4 that outings were included in the treatment for the experimental group and field-notes were taken by the researcher and the team leaders. When the field-notes were taken, special attention was paid to the following areas:

- Subjects' attitudes during the collection of vocabulary
- Subjects' behavior in collecting vocabulary

From the field-notes, it was found that subjects were considered as enthusiastic towards vocabulary collection. Data from the field-notes revealed that most of the experimental subjects were very willing to take the initiative to collect vocabulary and write down the word meaning during the three outings. In addition, they were attentive and very concentrated on the vocabulary collection tasks and they were interested in learning words by themselves. However, one team leader found that a minority of the male subjects tried to copy the words they had collected from one another so as to enlarge their own vocabulary lists.



#### 4.6.4 Interviews with English teachers

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with five English teachers in order to gain information about the teaching and learning of vocabulary in HK EFL classrooms. The interviewees' opinions on the current methodology of vocabulary teaching and the grammar-translation approach for the teaching of vocabulary were presented in 2.3. In this section, the teachers' difficulties in vocabulary teaching, their suggestions on how students can develop a rich corpus of vocabulary and their opinions on the Extensive Reading Scheme (ERS) will be presented. For the transcription of interview, please refer to Appendix P.

##### 4.6.4.1 Difficulties in the teaching of vocabulary

The greatest difficulty the interviewees encountered in teaching vocabulary was that most students were very passive. They did not take the initiative to learn words but depended on the teachers to provide them with the pronunciation, meaning, spelling and usages of words. The followings are some of the comments given by the respondents:

"I think they are **too passive**. Although they are interested in learning words, after they have learned the words in class, they **will not try to explore more into the words**. They will not try to see if the words have any alternative meaning." [T2]

"They only **learn words superficially** and they won't like to go deeper." [T1]

Apart from students' passivity in word learning, the EFL learning environment in Hong Kong was also considered as one of the obstacles for their teaching of vocabulary.

"For students in a CMI school, their difficulties can be understood since **they do not have a lot of time to come into contact with English**. The number of vocabulary that can be introduced only during the few English lessons is very limited. The number is so few." [T2]

"Since most Hong Kong people don't use English in their daily communication, **students can seldom practice using the words they've learned**." [T3]

"Since they don't have other method or subjects which can give them chances to use English. It seems that **they are learning English as a subject** but not learning how to put English into real application." [T1]

It was found that Hong Kong students seldom have chances to come into contact with English in their daily lives or even at school if they are studying in schools which adopt Chinese as the medium of instruction. One teacher commented that students did not see the need to learn English. As a result, it adds more complexities to the teaching of vocabulary in the classrooms.

The interviewees complained that even though students had learned the words, they were always unable to put the words into application.

"**They don't know how to use the words in context**. It is usually the case that they know the meaning of the words but when it comes to a situation, they don't know how to use the words in context." [T1]

"Even though students have learned the words, **when it comes to application**, for instance, when they are asked to make sentences or fill in the blanks using the words they have learned, **they can seldom do so**." [T5]

What are the reasons behind their incompetence in putting the words into real usages? This is a problem which is worth further investigation and it will be explored in Chapter 5.

Two of the interviewees complained that students did not have enough sensitivity towards words around them.



**“They won’t pay attention to the words around them.” [T1]**

**“The sensitivity of our students towards words is really very low.” [T2]**

The interviewees also expressed other difficulties in teaching vocabulary. They reflected that students easily forgot the words as the words taught were detached from their daily lives and did not speak to their personal experience. In addition, the teaching schedule was so tight that little time could be devoted to vocabulary teaching. Moreover, there were too much words for students but their level of English was low. As a result, vocabulary teaching became a difficulty task for teachers.

#### 4.6.4.2 Suggestions on the ways to enrich learners’ mental lexicon

The interviewees were also invited to give suggestions on how learners can develop a rich mental lexicon. Two of the interviewees [T3 and T5] saw the role learners should play in the process of word learning. They believed that self-learning was important.

**“It depends mostly on learners themselves. One should take the initiative to learn words.” [T5]**

Having awareness of words in our surrounding environment was also claimed to be beneficial to word learning.

**“For instance, when they go to the department store, they can learn a lot of words.” [T3]**

**“..... learners can pay more attention to the words around them. For instance, the MTR station names.” [T5]**

The interviewees also believed that developing the habit in reading would help learners acquire more words.

“They should **read more books**. I think they can read more novels, newspapers or magazines. Read something that they are interested in. If they like playing basketball, they can read those magazines about NBA. However, I think reading fictions is the best as they can learn a lot of words that are very useful for composition.” [T4]

#### 4.6.4.3 Opinions on the Extensive Reading Scheme (ERS)

The interviewees were also asked to comment on the ERS which is a territory-wide reading program implemented at secondary one to three levels. From their responses, it appeared that ERS had a lot of limitations although it was frequently claimed to be effective for learners’ word acquisition.

“..... while they are doing the reading, **they just try hard to find out the answers but not enjoying the content of the books.**” [T3]

“I think most of them are not doing it properly. They **don’t read carefully.**” [T4]

“Most of them are **not really interested in reading**. They don’t think they can get anything from reading books. They are just doing something as ordered by the teachers. They will not develop the habit of self-learning.” [T5]

When explaining the reasons why students were not serious during the ERS lessons, most of the interviewees put the blame on the content of the storybooks.

“The books **cannot capture students’ interest.**” [T2]

“..... since the books are **not interesting**, so they just copy the answers directly from the books.” [T1]

“I think the selection of books is very important. The books we are now using are provided by the Education Department. I learned from my friends that those books are mainly from Britain so **the content of the stories is not related to local context**. They are **not related to our daily life.**” [T3]



Although most of the comments received on the ERS were negative, there also existed some positive ones. They are quoted below:

"I will be **useful if it is implemented successfully**. You can really push them to read. The first step is that you can make them and encourage them to read. To make them think that reading books can help them and reading is interesting. Afterwards, they can develop the initiative to read, then the effectiveness will be the greatest." [T1]

"I think it's quite effective. Students do extensive reading once a week, it's **a kind of variation** for them. In addition, they **don't need to learn words from the textbooks only**. It's quite interesting for them." [T4]

From the interviews with English teachers, we can see that teachers in Hong Kong are confronted with great difficulties in their teaching of vocabulary. Although the Extensive Reading Scheme (ERS) has been implemented for learners to acquire more words through pleasure reading, teachers complained that most students have not benefited a lot from the scheme. As a result, there seems to be a need to adopt a word teaching/learning strategy from which learners can acquire words efficiently.

## **4.7 Summary of Chapter 4**

Chapter 4 presents the quantitative and qualitative data collected. The four research hypotheses are answered with reference to the data gained from the various research instruments. In summary, Chinese EFL learners are able to acquire vocabulary by the VSS (Hypothesis 1 is upheld); the VSS is not a better means than the current methodology of vocabulary teaching for foreign language vocabulary teaching (Hypothesis 2 is rejected); the VSS is more effective for the retention of vocabulary than the current methodology of vocabulary teaching (Hypothesis 3 is upheld) and finally, learners are more motivated to acquire vocabulary by the VSS (Hypothesis 4). A detailed discussion of the research questions and hypotheses will be given in Chapter 5.



## Chapter 5

# DISCUSSION

Chapter 5 will be divided into four major sections. First, the quantitative and qualitative data presented in Chapter 4 will be used to verify the various hypotheses and their corresponding null hypotheses. Second, the four research questions will be discussed in section three. The last section will be devoted to the discussion on the Vocabulary Self-collection Strategy (VSS) as an alternative means for the acquisition of vocabulary.

### 5.1. The Research Hypotheses Tested

The hypotheses and their corresponding null hypotheses stated in Chapter 2 are recapitulated below and a summary of the testing results of the hypotheses is offered in Table 14.

**Hypothesis 1**: Chinese EFL learners will be able to acquire vocabulary by the VSS

Analyzing data from the pre-test and 1<sup>st</sup> post-test [cf. Table 5] together *upheld Hypothesis 1*.

**Hypothesis 1 (Ho)**: Chinese EFL learners will not be able to acquire vocabulary by the VSS.

Analyzing data from the pre-test and 1<sup>st</sup> post-test [cf. Table 5] together *rejected Hypothesis 1 (Ho)*.

**Hypothesis 2:** VSS will be a better means than the current methodology of vocabulary teaching for foreign language vocabulary acquisition.

Analyzing data from the pre-test and 1<sup>st</sup> post-test [cf. Table1, Table 2, Table 3 and Table 4] together *rejected Hypothesis 2*.

**Hypothesis 2 (Ho):** VSS will not be a better means than the current methodology of vocabulary teaching for foreign language vocabulary acquisition.

Analyzing data from the pre-test and 1<sup>st</sup> post-test [cf. Table1, Table 2, Table 3 and Table 4] together *upheld Hypothesis 2(Ho)*.

**Hypothesis 3:** VSS will be more effective for the retention of vocabulary than the current methodology for vocabulary teaching.

Analyzing data from the 1<sup>st</sup> and the 2<sup>nd</sup> post-tests [cf. Table 7, Table 8 and Table 9] together *upheld Hypothesis 3*.

**Hypothesis 3 (Ho):** VSS will not be more effective for the retention of vocabulary than the current methodology for vocabulary teaching.

Analyzing data from the 1<sup>st</sup> and the 2<sup>nd</sup> post-tests [cf. Table 7, Table 8 and Table 9] together *rejected Hypothesis 3(Ho)*.

**Hypothesis 4:** Learners will be more motivated to acquire vocabulary by VSS.

Analyzing data from the post-program questionnaire [cf. 3.5.2 and 4.7.1], semi-structured interviews with subjects [cf. 4.7.2] and the researcher's and team leaders' field-notes [cf. 4.7.3] together *upheld Hypothesis 4*.

**Hypothesis 4 (Ho):** Learners will not be more motivated to acquire vocabulary by VSS.

Analyzing data from the post-program questionnaire [cf. 3.5.2 and 4.7.1], semi-structured interviews with subjects [cf. 4.7.2] and the researcher's and team leaders' field-notes [cf. 4.7.3] together *rejected Hypothesis 4(Ho)*.



Altogether, as shown in Table 21, the results of this study upheld Hypotheses 1, 3 and 4, but rejected Hypothesis 2. These findings will be discussed further in Section 5.2 below.

**Table 21. Summary of Hypotheses and results**

Hypothesis	Instruments	Hypotheses (rejected / upheld)
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pre-program test on vocabulary</li> <li>1<sup>st</sup> post-program test on vocabulary</li> </ul>	upheld
1 (Ho)		rejected
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pre-program test on vocabulary</li> <li>1<sup>st</sup> post-program test on vocabulary</li> <li>Post-program questionnaire</li> <li>Semi-structured interviews with subjects</li> </ul>	rejected
2(Ho)		upheld
3		upheld
3(Ho)		rejected
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Post-program questionnaire</li> <li>Semi-structured interviews with subjects</li> </ul>	upheld
4(Ho)		rejected

## 5.2 Discussion of Research Questions

### 5.2.1 The acquisition of vocabulary by the Vocabulary Self-collection Strategy

From the pre-test and the 1<sup>st</sup> post-test, it has been observed that subjects in the experimental group were able to acquire vocabulary by the Vocabulary Self-collection Strategy (VSS) [cf. 4.2.2]. The experimental group gained a significant improvement in the mean score in the 1<sup>st</sup> post-test as proved by the paired-samples t-test. As a result, Hypothesis (i.e., Chinese EFL learners will be able to acquire vocabulary by the

Vocabulary Self-collection Strategy) is upheld. Their gain in mean score was 7.129 which was even slightly higher than the 6.975 gain of the control group [cf. Table 5 and Table 6]. What might have contributed to the improvement in vocabulary knowledge for the experimental group?

*i. A relaxing vocabulary learning environment*

According to Krashen's Input Hypothesis (1982), language acquisition takes place subconsciously with the presence of a large amount of L2 input in an informal setting. Krashen believes that language learners can acquire a second language easily in a tension-free and relaxed learning environment. In the treatment prepared for the experimental subjects, outings were included. The destinations for the outings were all places which were highly related to subjects' daily lives e.g. fast food shop, supermarket. They were places where subjects would frequently visit during their leisure time. This non-classroom vocabulary learning environment thus provided them with a more relaxing and tension-free learning environment. In addition, there were also the presence of a large amount of L2 input. As a result, subjects were able to acquire a lot of vocabulary and gained a significant improvement in their vocabulary knowledge.

*ii. An exciting vocabulary self-learning experience*

As mentioned in 2.9, most students in Hong Kong are used to the traditional grammar-translation, teacher-centered approach to vocabulary learning. They can seldom enjoy the chance to take charge of their own learning. However, in the present study, the experimental subjects had shifted their roles from passive vocabulary learners to active



vocabulary seekers. They were given ample chances to acquire words. Moreover, during the whole vocabulary acquisition process, they were not totally abandoned. There were vocabulary nomination and follow-up activities after each vocabulary collection activity. These activities had provided them with a sense of achievement and satisfaction as they could share the words they collected with other students in class. In addition, the activities also consolidated the knowledge of the words they had collected.

In fact, the experimental design was an exciting vocabulary learning experience for the experimental subjects. This can be confirmed by the data gained from the post-program questionnaire and the semi-structured interview [cf. 4.5.2 and 4.7.1.2]. The majority of the subjects claimed that they learned better through the VSS. Moreover, the subjects claimed that they enjoyed learning new words by collecting the words on their own as it was an interesting and refreshing experience. Data gained from the researcher's and team leaders' field-notes also revealed that the subjects were all very attentive, enthusiastic and concentrated during the process of vocabulary self-collection [cf. 4.7.3]. As a result, the subjects had a great improvement in vocabulary knowledge after the program.

#### **5.2.2 The acquisition of vocabulary under the VSS and the current methodology of vocabulary teaching**

As presented in 4.2.1, the independent-samples *t*-test had revealed that there was no significant difference between the vocabulary knowledge of the two groups after the

program. In other words, the different treatment received by the experimental group (i.e., the VSS) and the control group (i.e. the current methodology of vocabulary teaching) had not brought any significant difference to their vocabulary knowledge after the program. As a result, Hypothesis 2 (i.e., VSS will be a better means than the current methodology of vocabulary teaching for foreign language vocabulary acquisition) is rejected.

#### 5.2.2.1 VSS being equally effective as the current methodology of vocabulary teaching

Although there existed no significant difference between the vocabulary knowledge of the two groups, we cannot deny the effectiveness of the VSS on EFL vocabulary acquisition merely by the result of the independent-samples t-test. For this purpose, two paired-samples t-tests were performed to examine if there was any within group significant difference in subjects' vocabulary knowledge after they received the treatment [cf. 4.2.2 and 4.2.3]. The results of the paired-samples t-test showed that both groups gained significant improvement in their vocabulary knowledge with the experimental group performed slightly better than the control group although the difference was not statistically significant.

What can be derived from the results of the various statistical tests? First, statistically, the VSS is not a better means than the current methodology of vocabulary teaching for the acquisition of vocabulary. It leads to a rejection of Hypothesis 2. Second, although VSS is not a more powerful tool for EFL vocabulary acquisition, it is at least,



equally effective as the current approach. In other words, Hypothesis 1 (i.e. Chinese EFL learners will be able to acquire vocabulary by the VSS) is upheld.

#### 5.2.2.2 The value of existence for the current methodology of vocabulary teaching

Although there existed a lot of criticisms on the current methodology of vocabulary teaching [cf. 4.6.1.1 and 4.6.2.1], why did the approach remain effective for the acquisition of vocabulary for the control group? Perhaps, the current approach also has its value of existence as could be shown by the data gained from the post-program questionnaire and interviews.

The use of L1 translation in the explanation of word meaning was frequently quoted by the subjects as the major advantage for the current methodology of vocabulary teaching. They claimed that the provision of L1 equivalents of English vocabulary allowed them easy understanding of word meanings. Once a new word was introduced, they could easily remember its L1 equivalent without the need to bother with its meaning or definition in English which appeared to be much more difficult to them. The convenience in understanding word meaning may be one of the reasons which contributes to vocabulary learning under this approach.

Apart from the use of L1, the adoption of synonyms during the word explanation process was also claimed to be effective for vocabulary learning. The subjects believed that word learning in terms of synonyms was appropriate and effective. This can be explained by the fact that all subjects were taught by the synonym-explanation approach

in their whole English learning experience, therefore they had got used to this approach and did not understand that the meaning of not every word can be fully substituted or explained by a synonym. However, the ease in learning words in terms of synonyms may help them understand the partial meaning of a word which explains why certain words could still be acquired under the current approach.

As mentioned earlier, repetition is a dominant feature of the current methodology of vocabulary teaching. During the word learning process, learners are required to orally repeat the words several times until they can master the pronunciation. Although this rote repetition of word pronunciation has been widely criticized as too mechanical and meaningless, it still has its role to play in the word learning process. From the interviews with subjects, it was found that repetition would lead to a deeper impression of words. As a result of repetition, the word meaning together with the pronunciation can be stored in learners' mental lexicon for a certain period of time after the word was introduced.

### **5.2.3 The retention of vocabulary under the VSS and the current methodology of vocabulary teaching**

As one of the main aims of the VSS is for the long term retention and deep understanding of words and word meaning [cf. 2.10.1], a second post-test was administered on both the experimental and control groups to compare the retention of vocabulary under the two different pedagogical approaches.



After the statistical analysis of the independent-samples t-test, it was found that the loss in mean score by the experimental group was significantly less than the loss by the control group. This implies that subjects in the experimental group in which the VSS was adopted retained more vocabulary than those subjects in the control group which were taught by the current methodology of vocabulary teaching. As a result, Hypothesis 3 (i.e., VSS will be more effective for the retention of vocabulary than the current methodology for vocabulary teaching) is upheld. What are the reasons why VSS is more powerful and effective for the retention of vocabulary than the current methodology of vocabulary teaching? Data collected from the questionnaire and interviews with the experimental subjects has provided us with some insights into the above question.

In the treatment received by the experimental group, three outings were included for subjects' collection of vocabulary. These outings, as claimed by the subjects, played an important role in their learning and retention of vocabulary. Subjects could see the real objects personally when collecting words in the fast food shop or supermarket. As a result, the meanings of words became more vivid and lively and thus resulted in a deeper impression of words and word meanings. In addition, the contexts for vocabulary collection were highly related to their daily lives. This sense of belonging and personal attachment also enhanced their memory of words.

During the vocabulary collection process, subjects had to take an active role in the acquisition of words. They had to turn themselves from passive word learners to active word seekers and took charge of the whole word collection procedure. Through the

personal engagement and involvement in the word learning process, it was claimed that the words were better retained than those words which were learned from teachers. Subjects also believed that words learned by rote repetition from the current methodology of vocabulary teaching would be easily forgotten as they were not fully involved in the learning process. They did not need to take the initiative to seek for word learning opportunities and word meanings. As a result, the words learned could not be easily retained in their mental lexicon and became their active vocabulary. On the contrary, the VSS requires learners to take an active role in word learning. In order to learn a word, they had to search for the meaning actively on their own. Consequently, the words learned will be retained for a more prolonged period.

Keller (1984, cited in Crookes and Schmidt, 1989) identified interest as one of the main elements of motivation, defining it as a positive response to stimuli based on existing cognitive structures in such a way that learners' curiosity is aroused and sustained. From the questionnaire and interviews, it was observed that most subjects found the VSS more interesting than the current methodology of vocabulary teaching. On the contrary, the current approach was being labeled as monotonous and boring. This may be a main reason why the experimental subjects' retention of vocabulary was significantly better. The VSS was able to capture subjects' interest in vocabulary learning and they were motivated and willing to learn words through the VSS. Their motivation, interest and curiosity were raised by the VSS. As a consequence, a better and more vivid impression of words they had learned was resulted



#### **5.2.4 Motivation towards vocabulary acquisition under the VSS and the current methodology of vocabulary teaching**

As motivation plays an important role in the learning of a foreign language, the present study also addresses this issue on the aspect of vocabulary acquisition. As claimed by Ellis (1994, p. 36), motivation “affects the extent to which individual learners persevere in learning the L2, the kinds of learning behavior they employ, and their actual achievement”.

From the data collected from the questionnaire, interviews, researcher’s and team leaders’ field notes, subjects in the experimental group were found to be highly motivated to acquire words by the VSS. On the contrary, the control subjects showed less motivation in the word learning process. What might have resulted in the different degree of motivation towards vocabulary acquisition?

Crookes and Schmidt (1986) believe that in order to motivate students, their interest must be engaged in the learning tasks. However, engaging learners’ interest in the learning activities is not an easy task. A number of pedagogical studies (Holec, 1980, 1987; Dickinson, 1987) support the claim that interest is engendered if learners become self-directed. That means, learners are able to set up their own learning objectives, decide their own ways of achieving those objectives and evaluate their own progress.

The treatment received by the experimental group, i.e., the VSS enabled the subjects to become self-directed. During the program, the experimental subjects enjoyed a lot of freedom in the word learning process. For instance, they could decide how many

words they would like to collect during each vocabulary collection activity and the ways to collect the words, e.g., jotting down the words collected in a notebook or remembering them by heart. In addition, the follow-up activities also provided them opportunities to evaluate their own progress as compared with other learners. Thus, subjects were personally involved in the word learning tasks and they were enthusiastic about the acquisition of vocabulary. Consequently, they were highly motivated during the whole process of vocabulary self-collection.

When compared with the experimental group, the control subjects were far less motivated in the word learning process. This was because learners' interest in word learning could not be raised and sustained by the current methodology of vocabulary teaching. The subjects always complained that the approach was boring and monotonous [cf. 4.6.1.1]. As a result, they did not have the motivation to acquire words during the program.

Having discussed the characteristics of the current methodology of vocabulary teaching [cf. 2.3 and 2.4], it is justifiable to conclude that the approach is highly teacher-centered. Teachers played the dominant role in the word learning process without personally involving the learners. All the aspects of word learning, e.g., pronunciation, meaning are readily provided by teachers. As a result, learners cannot take charge of their own learning. In addition, the current approach emphasizes rote learning, so learners' interest in word acquisition can hardly be nurtured. It can be proved by the data obtained



from the questionnaire [cf. 4.6.1.1] and interviews [cf. 4.6.2.1] that most subjects found the current methodology mechanical and monotonous.

As mentioned earlier, there are two pre-requisites before learners can become motivated in a learning task. First, they should be self-directed and be able to take charge of their own learning. Furthermore, they should have interest in the learning task. Unfortunately, these two important pre-requisites were not found in the current methodology of vocabulary teaching. If learners are not allowed freedom in the word learning process, their interest can seldom be engaged. Hence, subjects in the control group, in which the current methodology was adopted as the teaching methodology, were not motivated towards vocabulary acquisition.

### **5.3 The issue of vocabulary in HK EFL classrooms**

As the acquisition of vocabulary is an important component of foreign language acquisition, this section will be devoted to a discussion of the issue of vocabulary learning in HK EFL classrooms. First, a summary and discussion of opinions gained from the questionnaire and interviews on the current methodology of vocabulary teaching will be presented. Afterwards, students' difficulties in vocabulary learning and teachers' difficulties in the teaching of vocabulary will be discussed.

### **5.3.1 A summary and discussion of opinions on the current methodology of vocabulary teaching**

As discussed in 2.4, the current methodology of vocabulary teaching in Hong Kong resembles the traditional grammar-translation approach to EFL vocabulary teaching to a large extent. In the present study, information concerning subjects' opinions on the current approach to vocabulary teaching was collected. Both positive and negative comments were received. The two different sets of opinions will be summarized and discussed below:

#### **5.3.1.1 Negative opinions on the current methodology of vocabulary teaching**

As presented in 4.6.1.1 and 4.6.1.2, there were quite a number of negative opinions on the current methodology of vocabulary teaching.

The major attack on the current approach was that it was claimed to be boring and monotonous. Most subjects complained that word learning from this approach was very mechanical. Its monotony was attributed to the emphasis on rote repetition. Under this approach, learners were always required to pronounce the words repeatedly in order to learn the pronunciation. This mechanical repetition made learners feel bored and thus lose interest in learning vocabulary.

Second, subjects were also dissatisfied with the scope of words that can be learned from this approach. When adopting the current approach, teachers mainly focused on teaching the words in the textbooks but seldom introduced other words to



students. As a result, the words learners could acquire were confined to those words which appeared in the textbooks pre-selected by the school authorities. Moreover, the words in the textbooks might not speak to students' interest and personal experience. Consequently, there are doubts if the amount and relevancy of the words are appropriate for learners.

Next, it was found that some of the subjects criticized the approach as too teacher-centered. With everything readily prepared and provided by teachers, subjects complained that it would not benefit their word learning process. This was because they would become dependent on teachers and put heavy reliance on teachers when they learned vocabulary. They would seldom take the initiative to acquire words as they did not perceive the need to do so.

When complaining about the teacher-centeredness of the current approach, subjects also saw that the approach would not help the development of their independent word learning skills. When examining the quantitative data gained from the questionnaire in 4.4.1, it is interesting to find that the majority of the experimental subjects (38.5%) did not think their independent word learning skills could be developed if the word definitions were given by teachers. However, only 14.5% of the control subjects held the same opinion. This can be explained by the fact that the experimental subjects had undergone the experience of vocabulary self-collection. After the program, they started to understand that they could learn words without the guidance of teachers. As a result, they had an alternative approach to vocabulary learning which they could compare with the

current methodology of vocabulary teaching. On the contrary, the control subjects had never experienced the joy and effectiveness of vocabulary self-collection. They did not realize that there was a better approach, the VSS, which was more effective for the development of their independent word learning abilities. Hence, they may be led to believe that the current methodology of vocabulary teaching could help nurturing their independent word learning skills.

Subjects also expressed their discontent with the language used in the word instruction process. They complained that too much L1 (Chinese) was used. It was found that most teachers resorted to the use of Chinese for the explanation of word meaning. In fact, this may be a dilemma faced by the English teachers in Hong Kong and will be discussed in 5.3.3.

#### 5.3.1.2 Positive opinions on the current methodology of vocabulary teaching

One major positive comment on the current methodology was its power in the learning of pronunciation. In the current approach, repetition of pronunciation is a dominant part in the word teaching process. Subjects claimed that the repetition did allow them to better remember the pronunciation of words although it was a kind of rote learning. This implies that the current methodology of vocabulary teaching may be effective for the teaching of pronunciation.

Although there were criticisms against the use of L1 for word explanation, some subjects claimed that using L1 would make word learning easier. This may be explained



by the fact that subjects misbelieved that the meaning of a word could be fully captured by another word in their L1 as it was the way they were taught in their vocabulary learning experience. Apparently, it may be convenient to understand and remember an English word in terms of Chinese. However, this convenience could not compensate what the learners had lost in the word acquisition process because they could only get a partial understanding of words if they were explained in terms of L1. Moreover, using Chinese in the learning of English would be destructive to learners' acquisition of the language.

### **5.3.2 Students' difficulties in learning vocabulary**

In order to gain a comprehensive picture of the issue of vocabulary in Hong Kong EFL classrooms, students and teachers were invited to list the problems they encountered in the learning and teaching of vocabulary. In this section, students' difficulties in learning will be outlined and discussed. Concerning teachers' difficulties, they will be discussed in the next section.

From the data collected from the interviews, it was found that subjects perceived spelling and pronunciation as the most difficult. The majority of them had problems with both remembering the word spelling and pronunciation. In reality, the learning of pronunciation and spelling of words are inter-related. If learners are able to pronounce the words correctly, it will be easier for them to remember the spelling of words or vice versa. The learning of pronunciation and spelling are intrinsically linked. Therefore, if learners are poor in the pronunciation of words, they may not be able to do well in

spelling. This explains why most subjects found problems in both pronunciation and spelling.

Why are spelling and pronunciation the biggest obstacle for the learning of vocabulary in HK EFL classrooms? Perhaps, we should look at the problem with reference to the current methodology of vocabulary teaching. Under the current approach, when introducing the pronunciation of words, teachers would ask students to repeat the words several times in order to let them master the pronunciation. This rote repetition has received both positive and negative comments as discussed in 5.3.1. Some students claimed that repetition allowed them to get familiarized with the pronunciation whereas some perceived it as meaningless and monotonous. If the current approach can allow learners to learn pronunciation effectively, then why is pronunciation still being claimed as the greatest obstacle in the learning of vocabulary? The answer can be sought when we examine the approach in greater details. First, when teaching pronunciation, teachers only ask the whole class of students to repeat the words. However, there may always be individual learners who cannot catch up with what is being taught. Teachers have no way to make sure if every student in class has already mastered the pronunciation successfully. In addition, pronunciation can not be taught simply by rote repetition.

The second problem learners came across during word learning was the difficulty in understanding word meanings, especially those words with multiple meanings. This problem might have been caused by the way word meanings are conveyed in the current methodology of vocabulary teaching. In the current approach, word meanings are always



explained in terms of synonyms. Teachers seldom provide students with all the possible meanings of a word but instead only the most common meaning. Hence, this will lead learners to equate one word with another word without noticing the fact that a lot of words in English might have more than one meaning. As a result, learners will have problems in understanding the meanings of words if the meanings are not the ones they have learned.

Some learners also encountered problems in the usage of words. They were not able to put the words they had learned into real application [cf. 4.6.2.5]. For instance, they always found it difficult to make use of the words they had learned when they were writing compositions or making up sentences. What might be the reason behind their incompetence in putting the words into real usage? Again, the responsibility lay on the way they were taught. As the current methodology of vocabulary teaching does not put a lot of emphasis on teaching learners word usages, consequently, learners encounter problems when it comes to real application of words. In the current approach, teachers mainly focus on teaching learners the pronunciation and meaning of words [cf. 2.3]. Learners have few chances to practice putting the words they have learned into real usage. This is the reason why learners perceived the usage of words as another difficulty in vocabulary learning.

The use of L1 translation was also being quoted as a difficulty for vocabulary learning. When adopting the current methodology of vocabulary teaching, teachers always resort to the use of Chinese in the explanation of word meanings. Although it

appears to be convenient for the teaching of words, it has also created problems for learners. It is because the meaning of a word in one language cannot be easily and fully captured or explained by another language. It is especially the case for English and Chinese which differ a lot in their syntactic, semantic and pragmatic structures. Hence, the differences between English and Chinese cause problems for learners in the understanding of word meanings.

### **5.3.3 Teachers' difficulties in teaching vocabulary**

The teachers claimed that the greatest obstacle for the teaching of vocabulary was that the students are very passive towards vocabulary learning. They seldom take the initiative to learn words but always depend on the teachers to provide them with the words meanings. Some of them even do not bother to look up the words in the dictionary. This phenomenon can be explained by the data gained from the questionnaire and the interviews that most learners found vocabulary learning under the current methodology of vocabulary teaching boring, mechanical and monotonous. The current approach is not able to capture their interest in word acquisition. In their opinions, vocabulary learning is a tedious task which they do not welcome. The learners will not take the initiative to learn words if the teaching approach is boring and monotonous. Perhaps, teachers should change their ways of teaching so that learners' interest could be aroused. As a result, they would become active vocabulary learners.



The second difficulty in vocabulary teaching was attributed to the EFL teaching and learning environment. In Hong Kong, most people use Cantonese as the medium of communication. Students can seldom practice using English in their daily lives. When it comes to the classrooms, the situation is just similar. Most schools in Hong Kong adopt the mother tongue (Chinese) as the medium of instruction. All the subjects except English are taught in Cantonese. As a result, English lessons have become the only occasion for students to learn and practice English. However, the amount of vocabulary that can be introduced is very limited due to the time constraint. If English were the teaching medium for all the subjects, students could then learn a lot of words through different subjects. Moreover, students do not see the need to learn English as they communicate with one another in Cantonese in their daily lives. The learning of words to them is only for the sake of tests and examinations but not for the need in daily communication.

Teachers also complained that their students do not have enough word sensitivity. They are not aware of the fact that there are numerous words around them which they can learn with ease. Students are simply too dependent on the teachers during the word learning process. In their word learning experience, it is always the teachers who provide them with the words to be learned and the word meanings. In this system, it is understandable why students cannot develop the sensitivity and awareness towards words in their surrounding environment.

In 5.3.2, it was mentioned that students found difficulties in the usage of words. This was also a problem perceived by the teachers as their difficulty in word teaching.

They complained that even though they had taught the words, the students were not able to put the words into application. Some questions are raised here: In what ways did teacher instruct the words? Did they teach students the usages of words or just their pronunciation and meanings? If the students are not properly trained the usages of words, they can seldom put them into application even though they understand the word meanings.

Teachers claimed that the words which appear in the textbooks are not relevant to students' experience. Therefore, when it comes to the teaching of such words, teachers can seldom arouse students' attention and interest. Thus, the irrelevancy of words to learners' experience adds more complexities to the task of vocabulary teaching.

#### **5.4 The Vocabulary Self-collection Strategy (VSS) as a powerful tool to change learners' vocabulary acquisition attitudes and behavior**

In the present study, it was found that the word learning attitudes and behavior of the experimental subjects were altered by the Vocabulary Self-collection Strategy. In this section, we will look at the changes in learners' word acquisition attitudes and behavior in the following three aspects: The development of independent word learning skills, the raising of word sensitivity and awareness and the nurturing of higher motivation towards vocabulary acquisition.



#### **5.4.1 The development of independent word learning skills**

Having been taught by the current methodology of vocabulary teaching in their English learning experience, most students in Hong Kong rely heavily on teachers in the word learning process. They do not know that they can learn words on their own without the guidance of teachers. Moreover, they tend to think word learning is confined to the classroom setting with teachers instructing them in the pronunciation and meanings of words.

The present study has successfully changed the subjects' attitudes towards word learning. After the program, the subjects stated that they started to learn words by themselves outside classrooms. From the opinions gained from the interview [cf. 4.6.2.3], it was observed that subjects have become more independent and autonomous in vocabulary acquisition. They have started to collect, understand and learn words on their own. It is because the VSS has enabled them to realize that word learning can be a very independent business. Moreover, VSS lets them learn a new, easy, convenient and interesting way to acquire words. This learning activity can occur anytime and anywhere. In addition, there is no constraint on the quantity and scope of words that can be learned. All these are the favorable factors which contribute to the development of independent word learning skills by the VSS.

#### **5.4.2 The raising of word sensitivity and awareness**

Teachers in Hong Kong always complain that students are not sensitive towards words. As a result, they lose a lot of chances to learn more vocabulary. The present study confirms that the VSS is a powerful tool to raise and increase learners' word sensitivity. It can be used as a tool to heighten their words awareness.

As discussed in 2.9, Hong Kong EFL learners have got used to a teacher-centered approach for the learning of vocabulary. They can hardly develop word sensitivity without any initial guidance. As a result, VSS can act as an effective means to raise their attention to words in their surrounding environment. In this study, subjects claimed that their word sensitivity was heightened after the program. They also cited instances when they adopted VSS to learn words when they were shopping in the supermarkets or having dinner in restaurants [cf. 4.6.2.3]. All these confirm the power of the Vocabulary Self-collection Strategy (VSS) in raising learners' word sensitivity.

#### **5.4.3 The nurturing of higher motivation towards vocabulary acquisition**

It was found that most students are not motivated to learn vocabulary. Word learning is a boring, tedious and mechanical task for them. However, in this study, the subjects in the experimental group showed high motivation towards vocabulary learning. They were willing to take the initiative to acquire words on their own during the program. Moreover, they found vocabulary learning an interesting and challenging task after the program. The increase in motivation can be explained by the fact that vocabulary self-



collection is an interesting vocabulary learning experience for the subjects. During the program, they could enjoy the happiness of word learning which they had never experienced before.

## **5.5 Summary of Chapter 5**

Chapter 5 begins with a presentation of the testing results of the 4 hypotheses which then directly leads into the discussion of the four research questions. First, reasons why the Vocabulary Self-collection Strategy (VSS) resulted in the acquisition of vocabulary are suggested. Then, the effectiveness of the VSS as compared with the current methodology of vocabulary teaching on EFL vocabulary acquisition is discussed. The chapter goes on to outline the factors which may have contributed to the better retention of vocabulary under the VSS. Afterwards, the importance of motivation in vocabulary acquisition is discussed with regards to the last research question (i.e., Will learners be more motivated to acquire vocabulary by VSS?)

After a discussion of the four research hypotheses, the chapter sheds light on the issue of vocabulary in HK EFL classrooms. Difficulties in vocabulary learning and teaching are presented and analyzed.

The chapter concludes with a recommendation of the VSS as a powerful tool to change learners' vocabulary acquisition attitudes and behavior.

## Chapter 6

# CONCLUSION

The chapter is composed of three major sections: first, the pedagogical implications; second, the limitations of the present research; and third, some suggestions for further research.

### 6.1 Pedagogical Implications

This section discusses the pedagogical implications of the research findings. It is useful to recapitulate the findings of the study before we turn to the pedagogical implications. First, Chinese EFL learners are able to acquire vocabulary through the Vocabulary Self-collection Strategy (VSS). Second, the VSS leads to better retention of vocabulary than the current methodology of vocabulary teaching. Most importantly, the VSS changes the word learning behavior of learners. They have shifted their roles from passive vocabulary learners to active word seekers. Moreover, some information concerning the issues of vocabulary teaching and learning in HK EFL classrooms is gained from the study. Two types of implications could be derived from the present study: implications for language curriculum/program designs and implications for classroom teaching and learning.



### **6.1.1 Implications for curriculum or program designs**

The present section focuses on the implications of the Vocabulary Self-collection Strategy (VSS) for curriculum or program designs. The research findings provide evidence that the VSS is an effective tool for the teaching and acquisition of vocabulary. In this section, we will look at how the VSS can be exploited as a component of vocabulary teaching in the regular language curriculum in HK EFL classrooms and as an adjunct to an English camp.

#### ***The VSS as a component of vocabulary teaching in the regular language curriculum***

Due to the importance of vocabulary in language learning, some effective ways must be adopted to allow our learners to acquire more vocabulary. In Hong Kong, however, the teaching and learning of vocabulary have been perceived by both teachers and students as difficult and challenging. As a result, I would like to recommend the adoption of the VSS in the regular language curriculum. Teachers can implement the VSS regularly for their teaching of vocabulary for the following reasons:

- To add variation to the teaching and learning of vocabulary in the classroom setting
- To heighten learners' motivation in vocabulary acquisition
- To supplement the inadequacy of the current methodology of vocabulary teaching in arousing learners' word awareness and the development of autonomous word learning abilities

Given the time and administrative constraints, teachers may not be able to arrange outings for vocabulary self-collection during class time. However, they can ask students to go and collect words on their own after school or during leisure time. Afterwards, students can bring the words they have collected to class for nomination. The findings of the study prove that when learners are given the freedom to acquire vocabulary and take charge of the learning process, they will develop interest in word learning. Moreover, when the words they are responsible for collecting and learning are learned in an environment in which personal choice is paramount, they will no longer perceive the acquisition of words as a monotonous and tedious task. Therefore, instructional practice that creates such an environment – the VSS – should be included in the regular language curriculum for the benefits of our language learners.

#### ***The VSS as an adjunct to an English camp/ English learning program***

The present study has confirmed that the arrangement of the three outings for the collection of vocabulary in the experimental serves important functions. First, they provide authentic opportunities for learners to collect and understand the meanings of words on their own. Second, the experience of vocabulary self-collection through outing activities creates a deeper impression of words and word meanings. In addition, they serve as a trigger to let learners understand that words can be learned with ease anywhere and anytime in their daily lives.

In HK EFL classrooms, given the constraints of the school policies and the tightly packed syllabus, it may not be easy to arrange outings for learners to collect vocabulary



during class. However, the VSS may be implemented as part of the activities in an English camp or English learning program. The administrators of English camps may consider incorporating the VSS as a vocabulary learning activity as more time and freedom are allowed in the administration of camp activities rather than activities that confined to the classrooms. For an English learning program, the VSS can be adopted as part of the vocabulary teaching component in order to alter learners' attitudes and behavior towards word learning. It is believed that the exploitation of the VSS in an English learning program will increase learners' interest and motivation in word learning.

#### **6.1.2 Classroom implications**

The research findings reveal that efficient and effective vocabulary acquisition requires the combination of the following factors: an interesting vocabulary teaching methodology, word awareness and autonomous vocabulary learning skills. We will now turn to the implications of the above findings for classroom teaching and learning of vocabulary.

##### ***The adoption of an interesting vocabulary teaching methodology***

From the research findings, it can be observed that learners are not motivated or interested in word learning as the teaching methodology cannot capture their interest. In Hong Kong, a vocabulary teaching approach, which resembles the grammar-translation approach, has been exploited for the teaching of vocabulary. Under this approach, vocabulary learning is a boring, mechanical and tedious task. This results in students'

lack of interest in word learning. Therefore, it is vital to introduce a vocabulary teaching methodology which is more interesting. The adoption of the VSS as part of the regular vocabulary teaching activities is a plausible choice. Apart from this, learners ask for more interactive teaching approaches. They no longer want to be spoon-fed by their teachers. Therefore, more games and activities should be used when teaching vocabulary. In short, an efficient word teaching approach should be able to capture learners' interest in vocabulary learning before they can develop a rich mental lexicon.

### ***The raising of word awareness***

Having been taught by the current methodology of vocabulary teaching, Hong Kong EFL learners can seldom develop the awareness towards words in their surrounding environment. The teachers always complain that the learners have low word sensitivity. They do not pay attention to the ample word learning opportunities that lie around them in their daily lives. Added to the fact that most students in Hong Kong do not engage in leisure reading of English books, the amount of words they can learn is limited and is confined to those appearing in their English textbooks. As a result, it should be the teachers' role to heighten learners' word awareness and sensitivity. They should provide learners with opportunities to understand that words can be learned easily if they can be sensitive to their existence.

In the present study, it is found that the VSS has successfully increased learners' word awareness. After the vocabulary self-collection experience, all of them have become "word sensors". They start to pay attention to catch every word learning



opportunity. Thus, teachers should provide initial guidance to learners in order to heighten their word awareness. After they have become sensitive to words, they will be able to acquire a lot of words to enrich their vocabulary knowledge.

### ***The nurturing of autonomous vocabulary learning skills***

The pursuit of knowledge has increasingly been regarded as a life-long process which should not be stopped after the completion of formal education. Therefore, we should also try to turn students into autonomous word learners who are able and willing to take up the responsibility to learn by themselves. In order to achieve this aim, we should help them to develop autonomous vocabulary learning abilities.

As suggested by Ho and Crookall (1995), teachers should create “a learning environment or methodology which intends to help students to develop the skills and attitudes that sustain autonomous learning” (p. 238). The study has proved that once learners are guided to develop the skills for independent word learning, they are able and willing to learn by themselves without the guidance of teachers. Therefore, it is important for teachers to teach students the ways to become autonomous and independent word learners. Moreover, in the traditional Chinese EFL classrooms, teachers should also attempt to alter students’ view of classroom roles. They should let students understand that being autonomous does not mean the violation of the “relational hierarchy”(Chang and Holt, 1994, p. 105, cited in Ho and Crookall, 1995, p. 237). On the contrary, it is what they should do in order to come successful language learners.

## **6.2 Limitations of the Present Research**

Before outlining the limitations of the present research, let us recapitulate the experimental design. The present research was conducted in the form of a vocabulary acquisition program. The subjects for the study were 78 students from a local secondary school. Although the group size was able to satisfy the requirements of group statistics, it is not enough to allow us to come up with unequivocal conclusions about subjects' vocabulary acquisition behavior and retention rate.

The program was conducted on seven consecutive Saturday mornings and subjects were made to participate in the program on a compulsory basis. As they were not allowed the freedom to decide whether to attend the program or not, some of the subjects perceived the program as an extra workload added to their regular curriculum. Moreover, some of them complained that the program was an exploitation of their holidays as it was held on Saturdays but not school days. This psychological effect might have adversely affected their acquisition of vocabulary.

Due to the time constraints, there were only seven lessons, each lasting for two hours, in the vocabulary acquisition program. As a result, only a few categories of vocabulary, which were highly relevant to subject's daily lives, could be selected for investigation. In addition, given the time consideration, only three outings were included in the experimental design of the experimental group for vocabulary self collection. These might not be enough for the Vocabulary Self-collection Strategy (VSS) to activate its power for vocabulary acquisition. This may be the reason why the Vocabulary Self-



collection Strategy (VSS) does not appear to be more effective than the current methodology of vocabulary teaching for vocabulary acquisition, according to the results of the 1<sup>st</sup> post-test. However, the results of the 2<sup>nd</sup> post-test suggest that the VSS may be more effective for long-term retention of vocabulary.

The vocabulary chosen in the present study was confined mainly to concrete nouns and a few verbs. This is because the VSS is relatively new to EFL learners in Hong Kong and the experimental subjects will find it more manageable if they are asked to collect concrete nouns instead of vocabulary in other parts of speech. However, this design may limit the significance of the study. There are questions about the effectiveness of the VSS in the acquisition and retention of vocabulary other than the two chosen categories i.e. concrete nouns and verbs.

Given the nature of the study (i.e., to investigate the acquisition and retention of vocabulary under the Vocabulary Self-collection Strategy and the current methodology of vocabulary teaching), the vocabulary acquisition program had solely focused on vocabulary. Some subjects complained that it was too intensive to have two-hour sessions of word learning each Saturday morning for seven consecutive weeks. Had a longer period of time been allowed to conduct the program to reduce the level of intensity, these few complaints might not have appeared.

Although the study had certain limitations, the findings still provided us with some insights into the potential of the VSS for EFL vocabulary teaching and acquisition.

In addition, the study also has some research implications for EFL vocabulary teaching and acquisition which we will discuss in the next section.

### **6.3 Suggestions for Further Research**

After reviewing the limitations of the study and the pedagogical implications, this section provides some suggestions for further research.

The vocabulary selected for the investigation in the present study included mainly concrete nouns but only a few verbs. Future research may examine the acquisition and retention of vocabulary in other parts of speech under the current methodology of vocabulary teaching as compared with the Vocabulary Self-collection Strategy (VSS). This will enable a more comprehensive understanding of the effectiveness of the VSS in EFL vocabulary acquisition.

Due to the nature and scale of the current study, only one post-test was administered to measure learners' retention of vocabulary. As one of the aims of the VSS is for the long-term retention of vocabulary, future studies can exploit more post-tests for an extended period of time so as to look at learners' long-term vocabulary retention.

Given the time constraint, the vocabulary acquisition program could only last for a total of fourteen hours. The duration of the workshop could be extended so as to provide more chances for vocabulary self-collection. If this can be achieved, a more informed and comprehensive view on the effectiveness of the VSS on EFL vocabulary acquisition can be gained.



The subjects in the study had a comparatively low English proficiency studying in a school which adopted the mother tongue (i.e., Chinese) as the medium of instruction. Additional studies of the VSS are warranted in many different class settings and conditions, including learners with different English proficiency, learners studying in English-medium schools or from other EFL communities.

## 6.4 Summary of Chapter 6

Chapter 6 starts with a discussion of the pedagogical implications the research can provide. Concerning the implications for curriculum or program design, it is recommended that the Vocabulary Self-collection Strategy (VSS) can be adopted as a component of vocabulary teaching in the regular language curriculum or as an adjunct to an English camp or English learning program. In the classroom, it is important for teachers to adopt some interesting vocabulary teaching methods to motivate students. In addition, more attention should be paid to the raising of learners' word awareness and the nurturing of their autonomous word learning skills.

The next section focuses on the limitations of the present study: the problem with the sample size, subjects' discontent with the program arrangement, the limited number of outings included, the few categories of vocabulary chosen and the intensity of the program.

The chapter concludes with a section which provides some suggestions for future research. They include: (1) study of the effect of the VSS on the acquisition and retention of vocabulary in other parts of speech (e.g., verbs, pronouns, etc.); (2) study of the longitudinal effect of the VSS on vocabulary retention; (3) study which provides more chances for vocabulary self-collection through outing activities; (4) the exploration of the effectiveness of the VSS on learners of different English levels, educational background and in different EFL communities for its universality of application.



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## Appendices

### Appendix A. Documentation of the textbooks reviewed

<b>Name of textbook</b>	<b>Author(s)</b>	<b>Publisher</b>
Longman Target English (2001) (1 <sup>st</sup> ed.) [1A – 3B]	James Olsen, Kitty Chan and Alex Swan	Longman Hong Kong Education
Oxford Junior English (1999) (3 <sup>rd</sup> ed.) [1A – 3B]	J Hull	Oxford University Press
New Target English (1998) (1 <sup>st</sup> ed.) [1A – 3B]	Joan Waller	Addison Wesley Longman
Get Ahead (1997) [1A – 3B]	Sampson Nicholas	Macmillan Publishers (China) Limited



**Appendix B.** Schedule of the vocabulary acquisition workshop

**Vocabulary Acquisition Workshop**  
prepared for S.1 students in CCC Yenching College

**Control Group (Class 1B):**

	Date	Time	Topic
Lesson 1	8/9 (Sat)	8:30am – 10:30am	Fast food
Lesson 2	15/9 (Sat)	8:30am – 10:30am	Vegetables
Lesson 3	22/9 (Sat)	8:30am – 10:30am	Fruit
Lesson 4	29/9 (Sat)	8:30am – 10:30am	Seafood and meat
Lesson 5	6/10 (Sat)	8:30am – 10:30am	Household items
Lesson 6	13/10 (Sat)	8:30am – 10:30am	Fashion and clothes
Lesson 7	20/10 (Sat)	8:30am – 10:30am	Preparing food

**Experimental Group (Class 1A):**

	Date	Time	Topic
Lesson 1	8/9 (Sat)	10:45am – 12:45pm	Fast food ( <b>outing</b> to Mcdonald's restaurant in Marintime City)
Lesson 2	15/9 (Sat)	10:45am – 12:45pm	Vegetables and fruit I ( <b>outing</b> to Parkn' superstore in Marintime City)
Lesson 3	22/9 (Sat)	10:45am – 12:45pm	Vegetables and fruit II (consolidation and follow-up activities)
Lesson 4	29/9 (Sat)	10:45am – 12:45pm	Seafood and meat ( <b>outing</b> to Parkn' superstore in Marintime City and consolidation and follow-up activities)
Lesson 5	6/10 (Sat)	10:45am – 12:45pm	Household items
Lesson 6	13/10 (Sat)	10:45am – 12:45pm	Fashion and clothes
Lesson 7	20/10 (Sat)	10:45am – 12:45pm	Preparing food

## Appendix C. Detailed lesson plans for the experimental and control groups

### *Lesson 1 -- Fast food (Control group):*

Teaching point: vocabulary items of fast food

Class time : 2 hours (approx.)

Pre- entry : vocabulary items of food learned in primary school

Objectives : to learn vocabulary items of fast food

- a. to master the pronunciation of the target vocabulary items of fast food
- b. to understand the meaning of the target vocabulary items of fast food

Material : i. two comprehension passages about fast food  
ii. pictures of different kinds of fast food  
iii. a listening exercise

#### **Procedures:**

##### **Motivation (10 minutes):**

- subjects will be asked to give the names of their favorite fast food and their favorite fast food restaurant

##### **Presentation (90 minutes):**

Step 1 (30 minutes): - pictures of different kinds of fast food will be shown to subjects

- the meaning of the words will be explained to the subjects, necessary, the L1 translation will be given
- the pronunciation of the words will be provided by the researcher
- subjects will be required to repeat the words until they can successfully master their pronunciation

Step 2 (30 minutes): - a comprehension passage will be adopted for further instruction

- subjects will be asked to find out the words they have just learned and explain their meaning
- the researcher will go over the passage with the subjects and the target vocabulary items will be highlighted

Step 3 (30 minutes): - another comprehension passage will be used for instruction



- the treatment will be identical to the treatment on the first comprehension passage

**Consolidation (20 minutes):**

- students will be asked to do a listening exercises which require them to take food order

### ***Lesson 1: Fast food (Experimental Group)***

Teaching point: vocabulary items of fast food

Class time : 2 hours (approx.)

Pre- entry : vocabulary items of food learned in primary school

Objectives : a. to provide an opportunity for subjects to collect vocabulary of fast food during an outing to a fast food restaurant  
b. to enable the subjects to understand the meaning of the words they have collected through the experience of vocabulary self collection  
c. to help the subjects to master the pronunciation of the vocabulary through various consolidation exercises

Material : i. class handout  
ii. a listening exercise  
iii. plain paper

#### **Procedures:**

##### **Management of the outing:**

- the subjects will be divided into three groups
- the three team leaders (the researcher with two volunteers) will lead a team of 13 or 14 each
- individual leader will write down field-notes about subjects' learning behavior

##### **Preparation before the outing (10 minutes):**

- Briefing on the rules subjects should follow when they are on their trip
- Subjects will be told the target vocabulary items they have to collect during the trip i.e. vocabulary of fast food sold in a fast food restaurant

##### **Time spent on traveling (20 minutes in total)**

##### **Vocabulary self-collecting in a fast food restaurant (20 minutes)**

##### **Presentation of vocabulary items collected (15 minutes):**

- the researcher will ask the subjects to nominate the words they have collected and words will be written down on the blackboard
- subjects will be asked to explain the meaning of the words either in English or in their mother tongue



**Consolidation (55 minutes):**

- i. subjects will be divided into groups of two and carry out a class survey on their favorite fast food using the words they have collected during the trip (15 minutes)
- ii. a listening exercise will be adopted for subjects to practice taking food order (15 minutes)
- iii. subjects will be formed into groups of four and design a menu showing fast food and their prices for their newly-opened fast food restaurant “ Mac 1A”. Each group will have to show their menu to their classmates and a class voting will be held to elect the best fast food menu. (25 minutes)

## ***Lesson 2: Shopping in a supermarket – Vegetables (Control group)***

Teaching point: vocabulary items of vegetables

Class time : 2 hours (approx.)

Pre- entry : names of vegetables learnt in primary school

Objectives : to learn vocabulary of vegetables

- a. to master the pronunciation of the target vocabulary items of vegetables
- b. to understand the meaning of the target vocabulary items of vegetables

Material : i. two comprehension passages which contain names of vegetables  
ii. picture cards of vegetables  
iii. fresh vegetables  
iv. a crossword puzzle

### **Procedures:**

#### **Motivation (10 minutes):**

- the researcher will bring in class different kinds of vegetables commonly found in the supermarket
- subjects will be asked to give the names of the vegetables

#### **Presentation (90 minutes):**

Step 1 (30 minutes): - picture cards of vegetables will be adopted for direct instruction of the target vocabulary items

- the words will be printed on the picture cards together with their L1 translation
- subjects will be asked to repeat the words until they know their pronunciation

Step 2 (30 minutes): - a reading comprehension passage on vegetables will be used for further teaching of vocabulary items

- the researcher will pick up the names of vegetables for individual, focused instruction

Step 3 (30 minutes): - another reading comprehension passage named "Going green" will be used as the teaching material

- vocabulary of vegetables will be highlighted for direct teaching

#### **Consolidation: (15 minutes):**

- subjects will be given a crossword puzzle vegetables
- 10 minutes will be given for subjects to finish the exercise during lesson



- the remaining time will be spent on checking the answers together with the subjects

**Preparation for the next lesson (5 minutes):**

- subjects will be asked to bring the kind of fruit they like to class in the next lesson or if it is not possible, they can collect a picture of it instead

## ***Lesson 2: Shopping in a supermarket – Vegetables and fruit I (Experimental group)***

Teaching point: vocabulary items of vegetables and fruit

Class time : 2 hours (approx.)

Pre- entry : vocabulary of vegetables and fruit previously learnt in primary school

Objectives : a. to provide an opportunity for subjects to collect vocabulary of vegetables and fruit during an outing to a supermarket  
b. to enable the subjects to understand the meaning of the words they have collected through the experience of vocabulary self collection

Material : Nil

### **Procedures:**

#### **Management of the outing:**

- subjects will be divided into two groups in which each consists of approximately 20 students
- three group leaders will be responsible for supervising students' behavior during the outing
- in order to avoid affecting the business and operation of the supermarket visited, the two groups will be collecting different category of vocabulary at the same time i.e. while group 1 is collecting vocabulary of vegetables in the vegetables counter, group 2 will be collecting vocabulary of fruit in another section of the supermarket

#### **Preparation before the outing (30 minutes):**

- Briefing on the rules subjects should follow when they are on their trip
- Subjects will be told the target vocabulary items they have to collect during the trip i.e. vocabulary of vegetables and fruit
- the floor plan of the supermarket will be distributed to the subjects
- Owing to the ease of management, the two groups will be collecting different category of vocabulary at the same time, the subjects will be given clear instruction on the sequence of vocabulary collection

#### **Time spent on traveling (20 minutes in total)**

#### **Self collection of vocabulary in a supermarket (70 minutes)**

- (35 minutes) Group 1 will collect vocabulary of vegetables once they arrive the supermarket while group 2 will collect vocabulary of fruit



- (35 minutes) After the subjects in group 1 have collected the vocabulary of vegetables in the first 40 minutes, they will then start to collect vocabulary of fruit. At the same time, group 2 will collect vocabulary of fruit

### ***Lesson 3: Shopping in a supermarket – Fruit (Control group)***

Teaching point: vocabulary of fruit

Class time : 2 hours (approx.)

Pre- entry : names of fruit learnt in primary school

Objectives : to learn vocabulary of fruit

- a. to master the pronunciation of the target vocabulary items of fruit
- b. to understand the meaning of the target vocabulary items of fruit
- c. to revise the vocabulary of fast food and vegetables learnt in previous lessons

Material : i. picture cards of fruit  
          iii. fresh fruit  
          iv. class survey forms

#### **Procedures:**

##### **Motivation (20 minutes):**

Step 1 (10 minutes): subjects will be asked to show his or her favorite fruit to the class and tell the class its name in English. If the subject is unable to supply the English name of the fruit, the researcher will ask other students to help or provide the name instead.

Step 2 (10 minutes): the researcher will display her favorite fruit to the group and give the names of the different kinds of fruit in English.

##### **Presentation (50 minutes):**

- picture cards of fruit will be used for direct instruction of the target vocabulary items
- the names of the fruit will be printed on the picture cards together with their translation in subjects' L
- subjects will be asked to repeat the words until they know their pronunciation

##### **Consolidation (50 minutes):**

Task 1 (25 minutes): - a class survey will be carried out by the subjects

- each subjects will have to do a survey so as to know the kinds of fast food, vegetables and fruit that their classmates like
- subjects will be given initial instruction on how to ask questions in the survey in order to elicit the required information
- the will be divided into four groups and carry out interviews with



the students in the same group until all the students are being interviewed (15 minutes)

- then each group will have to report their findings to the whole class and the researcher will summarize the results and see what are the fast food, vegetable and fruit that students like most (10 minutes)

Task 2 (25 minutes): - a chess game called “apples, oranges and onions” will be adopted as extended practice

- the game rules will be introduced to subjects before they start playing the game (5 minutes)
- subjects will be given 20 minutes to play the game

***Lesson 3: Shopping in a supermarket – Vegetables and fruit II (Experimental group)***

Teaching point: vocabulary items of vegetables and fruit

Class time : 2 hours (approx.)

Pre- entry : vocabulary of vegetables and fruit previously learnt in primary school

Objectives : a. to provide a chance for subjects to nominate the words they have collected during the trip to the supermarket  
b. to help subjects to master the pronunciation of the vocabulary they have collected  
c. to consolidate subjects' knowledge about the meaning of the vocabulary of vegetables and fruit

Material : i. a matching exercise  
ii. a crossword puzzle  
iii. plain paper

**Procedures:**

**Nomination of vocabulary items collected (30 minutes):**

- the researcher will ask the subjects to nominate the two category of vocabulary they have collected and the words will be written down on the blackboard
- subjects will be asked to explain the meaning of the words either in English or in their mother tongue

**Consolidation (90 minutes):**

Task 1 (25 minutes): - two matching, one for vegetables and one for fruit, have been designed to consolidate subjects' knowledge of the words they have collected

- the exercises will require subjects to match different pictures of vegetables and fruit with their names in English (15 minutes)
- answers will be provided by the researcher upon completion of the task by the whole group (10 minutes)

Task 2 (30 minutes): - subjects will be given a word puzzle in which they have to find out the vocabulary of vegetables hidden in the puzzle (20 minutes)

- the researcher will then check the answer together with the subjects after they have completed the puzzle (10 minutes)

Task 3 (35 minutes): - groups of six will be formed for the following activity  
- subjects will be asked to decide an innovative recipe using one kind of vegetable and fruit they have learnt in the lesson (15 minutes)



- after small group discussion, each group will have to report what they have discussed to the whole class (20 minutes)

#### ***Lesson 4: Shopping in a supermarket – Seafood and meat (Control group)***

Teaching point: vocabulary of seafood and meat

Class time : 2 hours (approx.)

Pre- entry : vocabulary of seafood and meat previously learnt in primary school

Objectives : to learn vocabulary of seafood and meat  
a. to master the pronunciation of the target vocabulary items  
b. to understand the meaning of the target vocabulary items

Material : i. picture cards of seafood and meat  
ii. a comprehension passage  
iii. a listening exercise

#### **Procedures:**

##### **Motivation (15 minutes):**

- the researcher will ask the subjects what can be found in the sea in order to bring out the topic that will be covered during the lesson
- subjects will be asked what they have eaten for dinner the day before in order to let the subjects know we also eat seafood and meat in our everyday lives apart from vegetables and fruit

##### **Presentation (80 minutes):**

Step 1 (40 minutes): - different pictures of seafood and meat will be displayed to the subjects

- the researcher will tell the subjects the names of the seafood in English together with their L1 translation
- the subjects will be asked to mimic the words until the researcher is sure that they can master the pronunciation

Step 2 (40 minutes): - a comprehension passage which contains vocabulary of seafood will be used for instruction

- the researcher will go through the passage with the subjects and the vocabulary will be highlighted for direct and focused instruction

##### **Consolidation (25 minutes):**

- a listening exercise will be adopted as extended practice
- subjects will be asked to take food order during listening (15 minutes)
- the remaining 10 minutes will be devoted for answer checking



#### ***Lesson 4: Shopping in a supermarket – Seafood and meat (Experimental group)***

Teaching point: vocabulary items of seafood and meat

Class time : 2 hours (approx.)

Pre- entry : vocabulary of seafood and meat previously learnt in primary school

Objectives : a. to provide an opportunity for subjects to collect vocabulary of seafood and meat during an outing to a supermarket  
b. to enable the subjects to understand the meaning of the words they have collected through the experience of vocabulary self collection

Material : i. a matching exercise  
ii. a listening exercise

#### **Procedures:**

##### **Management of the outing:**

- subjects will be divided into two groups in which each consists of approximately 20 students
- three group leaders will be responsible for supervising students' behavior during the outing
- in order to avoid affecting the business and operation of the supermarket visited, the two groups will be collecting different category of vocabulary at the same time i.e. while group 1 is collecting vocabulary of meat in the meat counter, group 2 will be collecting vocabulary of seafood in another section of the supermarket

##### **Preparation before the outing (10 minutes):**

- Briefing on the rules subjects should follow when they are on their trip
- Subjects will be told the target vocabulary items they have to collect during the trip i.e. vocabulary of meat and seafood
- the floor plan of the supermarket will be distributed to the subjects
- Owing to the ease of management, the two groups will be collecting different category of vocabulary at the same time, the subjects will be given clear instruction on the sequence of vocabulary collection

##### **Time spent on traveling (20 minutes in total)**

##### **Self collection of vocabulary in a supermarket (40 minutes)**

- (20 minutes) Group 1 will collect vocabulary of meat once they arrive the supermarket while group 2 will collect vocabulary of seafood

- (20 minutes) After the subjects in group 1 have collected the vocabulary of meat in the first 20 minutes, they will then start to collect vocabulary of seafood. At the same time, group 2 will collect vocabulary of meat.

**Nomination of vocabulary items collected (20 minutes):**

- the researcher will ask the subjects to nominate the two category of vocabulary they have collected and the words will be written down on the blackboard
- subjects will be asked to explain the meaning of the words either in English or in their mother tongue

**Consolidation (28 minutes):**

Task 1 (13 minutes): - a matching exercise will be used as extended practice

- subjects will be asked to match pictures of seafood and meat with their names in English (10 minutes)
- the researcher will check the answer with the subject (3 minutes)

Task 2 (15 minutes): - a listening exercise will be adopted for further consolidation (10 minutes)

- 5 minutes will be devoted to check the answer

**Preparation for the next lesson (2 minutes):**

- subjects will be asked to bring with them authentic reading materials (e.g. articles or advertisements on newspaper, magazines, instruction booklets of electrical appliances) about household items to be used as the source for vocabulary self-collecting in the next lesson



### ***Lesson 5: Household items (Control group)***

Teaching point: vocabulary of different household items

Class time : 2 hours (approx.)

Pre- entry : vocabulary of household items previously learnt in primary school

Objectives : to learn vocabulary of household items

c. to master the pronunciation of the target vocabulary items

d. to understand the meaning of the target vocabulary items

Material : i. a picture-naming exercise

ii. an exercise which requires subjects to locate various household items on a floor plan

iii. a categorization exercise

### **Procedures:**

#### **Motivation (15 minutes):**

- researcher will point at the items found in the classroom e.g. desk, fan, chair, etc. and ask the subjects what household items can be found in their home

#### **Presentation (30 minutes):**

- each subject will be given a picture-naming exercise and the researcher will complete the exercise together with the subjects by providing guidance or answers if necessary
- the researcher will read aloud the answers and ask the subjects to repeat the vocabulary until they can master the pronunciation successfully

#### **Consolidation (75 minutes):**

Task 1 (20 minutes): - subjects will be given an exercise which asks them to locate various household items they have learnt on a floor plan of a house (10 minutes)

- the researcher will give the answers to the subjects once they have completed the exercise (10 minutes)

Task 2 (25 minutes): - a categorization exercise will be used as extended practice

- subjects will be asked to differentiate the places where different household items can be found (15 minutes)
- 10 minutes will be used for checking answers

Task 3 (30 minutes): - groups of four will be formed

- each group member will have to draw a floor plan of his or her home and describe how his or her home looks like to other members of the group

### ***Lesson 5: Household items (Experimental group)***

Teaching point: vocabulary of household items

Class time : 2 hours (approx.)

Pre- entry : vocabulary of household items previously learnt in primary school

Objectives : a. to provide an opportunity for subjects to collect vocabulary of household items through authentic reading materials  
b. to enable the subjects to understand the meaning of the words they have collected through the experience of vocabulary self collection

Material : i. authentic reading materials

#### **Procedures:**

##### **Motivation (15 minutes):**

- researcher will point at the items found in the classroom e.g. desk, fan, chair, etc. and ask the subjects what household items can be found in their home

##### **Self collection of vocabulary (30 minutes)**

- subjects will be formed into groups of four for the sharing of reading materials
- each group will be allocated a pile of authentic reading materials, in addition, they can also collect words from the reading materials they have brought into class

##### **Nomination of vocabulary items collected (30 minutes):**

- the researcher will ask the subjects to nominate the vocabulary they have collected and the words will be written down on the blackboard
- subjects will be asked to explain the meaning of the words either in English or in their mother tongue

##### **Consolidation (40 minutes):**

Task 1 (20 minutes): - subjects will be given an exercise which asks them to locate various household items they have learnt on a floor plan of a house (10 minutes)

- the researcher will give the answers to the subjects once they have completed the exercise (10 minutes)

Task 3 (20 minutes): - groups of four will be formed

- each group member will have to draw a floor plan of his or her



home and describe how his or her home looks like to other members of the group

**Preparation for the next lesson (5 minutes):**

- subjects will be divided into groups of four and each group will have to bring in one set of clothes they like most the next lesson
- each group will have to give the names of the clothing items during the lesson
- in addition, they have to get prepared to explain for their choices in English or in their L1

### ***Lesson 6: Fashion and Clothes (Control group)***

Teaching point: vocabulary of fashion and clothes

Class time : 2 hours (approx.)

Pre- entry : vocabulary of fashion and clothes previously learnt in primary school

Objectives : to learn vocabulary of fashion and clothes

e. to master the pronunciation of the target vocabulary items

f. to understand the meaning of the target vocabulary items

Material : i. pictures of different kinds of clothes

ii. a picture-naming exercise

iii. a matching exercise

iv. an exercise which asks subjects to describe what the people in the pictures are wearing

### **Procedures:**

#### **Motivation (15 minutes):**

- researcher will ask the subjects what she is wearing and what the subjects are wearing

#### **Presentation (55 minutes):**

Step 1 (30 minutes): - pictures of different kinds of clothes will be used for instruction

- the vocabulary of clothes in English will be provided by the researcher

- the subjects will have to read out the words aloud until they know how to pronounce them

Step 2 (25 minutes): - a picture-naming exercise will be used for further instruction

- the researcher will go over the exercise with the subjects and provide guidance or give the answers if necessary

#### **Consolidation (50 minutes):**

Task 1 (25 minutes): - subjects will be given a matching exercise for extended practise (15 minutes)

- the exercise requires subjects to match pictures of clothes with the words that illustrate them

- the researcher will go over the answer with the subjects upon completion (10 minutes)

Task 2 (25 minutes): - subjects will work in pair in this activity

- each subject will be given two different pictures with people wearing different kinds of clothing items



- each of the subject will have to describe to their partner what the people in his or pictures are wearing, at the same time, the partner has to draw a picture to illustrate the clothes his or her partner is talking about

### ***Lesson 6: Fashion and Clothes (Experimental group)***

Teaching point: vocabulary of fashion and clothes

Class time : 2 hours (approx.)

Pre- entry : vocabulary of clothing items previously learnt in primary school

Objectives : a. to provide an opportunity for subjects to collect and nominate vocabulary of clothes  
b. to enable the subjects to understand the meaning of the words they have collected through the experience of vocabulary self collection

Material : i. the set of clothes that the subjects have brought into class  
ii. a matching exercise  
iii. drawing paper

#### **Procedures:**

##### **Motivation (15 minutes):**

- researcher will ask the subjects what she is wearing and what the subjects are wearing

##### **Group discussion (20 minutes):**

- each group will have 15 minutes to discuss among group members the set of clothes they have brought
- through the discussion, they can tell the other members the vocabulary of clothes they have collected
- each group will also need to explain the reason for their choice

##### **Group presentation – Fashion show (50 minutes):**

- each group will select one of the group member to be the model and wear the set of clothes to perform in a fashion show
- after the performance, three other members of each group will have to introduce the set of clothes to the other groups and explain the reasons for their choices

##### **Consolidation (35 minutes):**

- subjects will still work in the same group for the extended practice
- each group will have to design two set of ideal uniforms (boys' and girls') for the school based on appearance and practicality
- 15 minutes will be given for group discussion and each group have to draw the two sets of uniforms on drawing paper
- 15 minutes will be used for presentation



- a class vote will be carried out after the presentation to elect the best uniform for the school

### ***Lesson 7: Preparing food (Control group)***

Teaching point: i. vocabulary on food preparation

ii. revise vocabulary of fast food, vegetables, fruit, seafood and meat

Class time : 2 hours (approx.)

Pre- entry : vocabulary for food preparation learnt in primary school and vocabulary of food learnt in previous lessons

Objectives : to learn vocabulary on food preparation

a. to master the pronunciation of the target vocabulary items

b. to understand the meaning of the target vocabulary items

Material : i. a comprehension passage

ii. a sequencing exercise

iii. a chart

iv. a picture describing exercise

### **Procedures:**

#### **Motivation (10 minutes):**

- the researcher will ask the subjects if they have any experience on cooking so as to bring out the topic of the lesson

#### **Presentation (30 minutes):**

- a comprehension passage on how to make tropical pudding will be used for instruction
- vocabulary on food preparation will be picked up and highlighted for individual, focused instruction
- subjects will be required to read aloud the verbs until they can master the pronunciation

#### **Consolidation (80 minutes):**

Task 1 (20 minutes): - the subjects will be given an exercise which contains jumbled instructions for making a Christmas pudding

- subjects will have to put the instructions in the right order (10 minutes)

- the researcher will check the answer with the subjects (10 minutes)

Task 2 (25 minutes): - subjects will be asked to complete a chart to show whether the types of food in the chart can be processed in different ways

- the researcher will go over the verb on food preparation before asking the subjects to complete the chart, the pronunciation and the meaning of the verbs will be provided by the researcher (10 minutes)



- the subjects will be given 10 minutes to finish the exercise
- the answers will be given by the researcher in the next 5 minutes

Task 3 (35 minutes):

- the subjects will be divided into groups of four
- each group will be given pictures which show the stages in preparing and cooking fried rice
- the researcher will give instruction on how to finish the exercise (10 minutes)
- first, they will have to fill in the ingredient box using the vocabulary of food they have learnt in previous lessons
- next, they have to write a sentence or two under each picture to make a complete recipe like the one for Christmas pudding that they have already studied (15 minutes)
- the researcher will go over the answers with the subjects upon completion of the task (10 minutes)

### ***Lesson 7: Preparing food (Experimental group)***

Teaching point: i. vocabulary on food preparation

ii. revise vocabulary of fast food, vegetables, fruit, seafood and meat

Class time : 2 hours (approx.)

Pre- entry : vocabulary for food preparation learnt in primary school and vocabulary of food learnt in previous lessons

Objectives : a. to provide an opportunity for subjects to collect and nominate vocabulary on food preparation

b. to enable the subjects to understand the meaning of the words they have collected through the experience of vocabulary self collection

Material : i. authentic reading materials (recipes found on newspaper, books and magazines)

ii. a picture describing exercise

iii. plain drawing paper

### **Procedures:**

#### **Motivation (15 minutes):**

- the researcher will ask the subjects if they have any experience on cooking so as to bring out the topic of the lesson

#### **Self collection of vocabulary (20 minutes):**

- subjects will be formed into groups of four for the sharing of reading materials
- each group will have to collect verbs on food preparation (e.g. fry, boil, beat, etc) from the authentic reading materials i.e. recipes

#### **Nomination of the vocabulary collected (15 minutes):**

- the researcher will ask each group to nominate the target vocabulary they have collected through the reading of authentic reading materials on their own
- the words nominated will be written down on the blackboard

#### **Consolidation(70 minutes):**

Task 1 (35 minutes): - the subjects will be divided into groups of four

- each group will be given pictures which show the stages in preparing and cooking fried rice

- the researcher will give instruction on how to finish the exercise (10 minutes)

- first, they will have to fill in the ingredient box using the vocabulary of food they have learnt in previous lessons



- next, they have to write a sentence or two under each picture to make a complete recipe like the one for Christmas pudding that they have already studied (15 minutes)
- the researcher will go over the answers with the subjects upon completion of the task (10 minutes)

Task 2 (35 minutes):

- each group will be asked to design a recipe using the verbs on food preparation and the vocabulary of food they have learnt the previous lessons
- 15 minutes will be devoted for group discussion
- each group will have to write down the recipe on a drawing paper for later presentation
- after small group discussion, each group will have to display and present the recipe they have designed to the whole class (20 minutes)

#### Appendix D. Pre-program test on vocabulary

1.



- A. Bread
- B. Pizza
- C. Hamburger
- D. Hot dog

2.



- A. Cauliflower
- B. Broccoli
- C. Cabbage
- D. Potato

3.



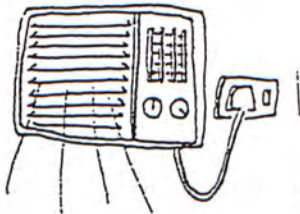
- A. Apple
- B. Orange
- C. Pear
- D. Melon

4.



- A. Lamb
- B. Beef
- C. Pork chop
- D. Chicken

5.



- A. Television
- B. Radio
- C. Cassette recorder
- D. Air-conditioner



6.



- A. Orange juice
- B. Soft drinks
- C. Beer
- D. Wine

7.



- A. Papaya
- B. Grapefruit
- C. Pumpkin
- D. Tomato

8.



- A. Clam
- B. Fish
- C. Crab
- D. Prawn

9.



- A. Peaches
- B. Tomatoes
- C. Grapes
- D. Cherries

10.



- A. Vase
- B. Cup
- C. Glass
- D. Bottle

11.



- A. Iced coffee
- B. Iced Tea
- C. Iced lemon tea
- D. Iced chocolate

12.



- A. Garlic
- B. Lettuce
- C. Eggplant
- D. Corn

13.



- A. Cuttlefish
- B. Squid
- C. Starfish
- D. Seahorse

14.



- A. Lemon
- B. Pear
- C. Apple
- D. Pineapple

15.



- A. Television
- B. Radio
- C. Iron
- D. Computer

16.



- A. Fried rice
- B. Fish fillets
- C. Hash brown
- D. French fries

17.



- A. Lettuce
- B. Mushroom
- C. Spinach
- D. Garlic



18.



- A. Crab
- B. Clam
- C. Shrimp
- D. Fish

19.



- A. Peach
- B. Orange
- C. Cherry
- D. Grapefruit

20.



- A. Refrigerator
- B. Air-conditioner
- C. Fan
- D. Oven

21.



- A. French fries
- B. Apple pie
- C. Cheeseburger
- D. Sandwich

22.



- A. Tomato
- B. Corn
- C. Potato
- D. Onion

23.



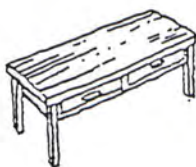
- A. Steak
- B. Pork chop
- C. Chicken
- D. Shrimp

24.



- A. Pumpkin
- B. Papaya
- C. Water melon
- D. Durian

25.



- A. Desk
- B. Table
- C. Cupboard
- D. Bed

26.



- A. Coffee
- B. Tea
- C. Soft drink
- D. Milk shake

27.



- A. Potato
- B. Tomato
- C. Eggplant
- D. Cabbage

28.



- A. Lobster
- B. Crab
- C. Scallop
- D. Shrimp

29.



- A. Durian
- B. Raspberry
- C. Plum
- D. Pear



36.



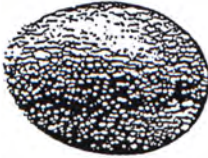
- A. Mushroom
- B. Potato
- C. Tomato
- D. Onion

37.



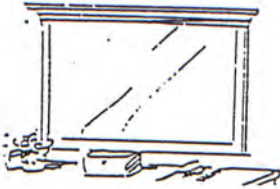
- A. Lemon
- B. Apple
- C. Orange
- D. Water melon

38.



- A. Mangosteen
- B. Sugar apple
- C. Mango
- D. Kiwi fruit

39.



- A. Blanket
- B. Mirror
- C. Rug
- D. Sink

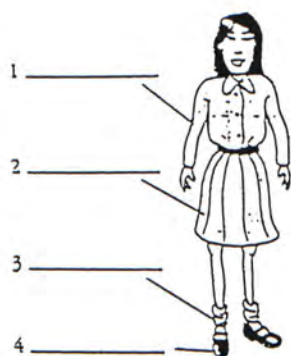
40.



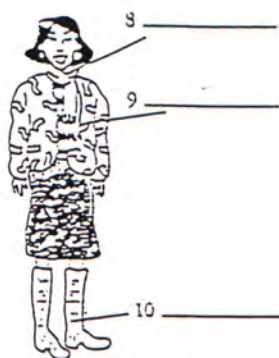
- A. Crab
- B. Clam
- C. Lobster
- D. Scallop

*B. Please fill in the blanks with the words provided.*

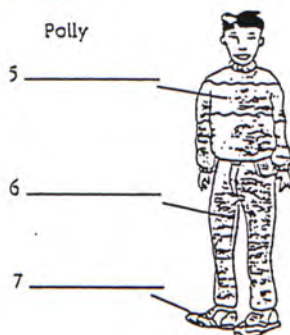
blouse	boots	jeans	jacket	overcoat
scarf	shirt	shoes	skirt	socks
sweater	tie	slippers	trainers	trousers
pajamas	shorts	sandals	bow tie	hat



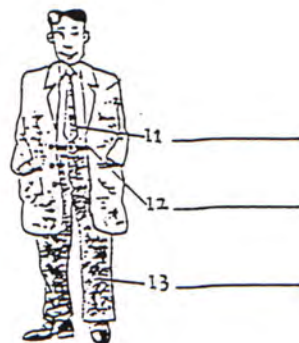
Polly



Mrs Smith



Sam



Mr Tung



C. Banana milk shake is a very popular drink. Look at the picture to find out how it is made. Then complete the recipe using the words given.

fill  
pour  
peel

get  
switch  
put

give  
cut

steam  
turn

add  
fry

mix  
stir

First, \_\_\_\_\_ a banana and \_\_\_\_\_ the banana.



Then, \_\_\_\_\_ the banana into small pieces.



\_\_\_\_\_ the banana into a blender.



Next, \_\_\_\_\_ the milk into the blender.



\_\_\_\_\_ a little sugar and vanilla ice-cream into the mixture.



Then, \_\_\_\_\_ on the blender.



After about thirty seconds, the blender will \_\_\_\_\_ all the other things together.

\_\_\_\_\_ off the blender.



\_\_\_\_\_ the glass with the milk shake.



Appendix E. 1<sup>st</sup> post-program test on vocabulary

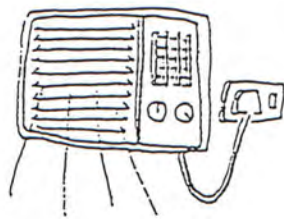
A. Please circle the correct answer

1.



- A. Crab
- B. Clam
- C. Lobster
- D. Scallop

2.



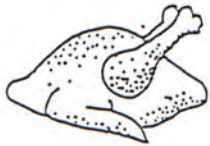
- A. Television
- B. Radio
- C. Cassette recorder
- D. Air-conditioner

3.



- A. Fried rice
- B. Fish fillets
- C. Hash brown
- D. French fries

4.



- A. Steak
- B. Pork chop
- C. Chicken
- D. Shrimp

5.



- A. Durian
- B. Raspberry
- C. Plum
- D. Pear



6.



- A. Rice cooker
- B. Oven
- C. Freezer
- D. Blender

7.



- A. Tea
- B. Coffee
- C. Milk
- D. Milk shake

8.



- A. Lobster
- B. Crab
- C. Scallop
- D. Shrimp

9.



- A. French fries
- B. Apple pie
- C. Cheeseburger
- D. Sandwich

10.



- A. Garlic
- B. Lettuce
- C. Eggplant
- D. Corn

11.



- A. Orange juice
- B. Soft drinks
- C. Beer
- D. Wine

12.



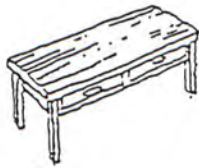
- A. Lamb
- B. Beef
- C. Pork chop
- D. Chicken

13.



- A. Mushroom
- B. Potato
- C. Tomato
- D. Onion

14.



- A. Desk
- B. Table
- C. Cupboard
- D. Bed

15.



- A. Water melon
- B. Honey dew melon
- C. Coconut
- D. Avocado

16.



- A. Clam
- B. Fish
- C. Crab
- D. Prawn

17.



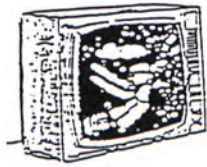
- A. Milk shake
- B. Twist cone
- C. Sundae
- D. Coke

18.



- A. Peaches
- B. Tomatoes
- C. Grapes
- D. Cherries

19.



- A. Television
- B. Radio
- C. Iron
- D. Computer

20.



- A. Tomato
- B. Corn
- C. Potato
- D. Onion

21.



- A. Bread
- B. Pizza
- C. Hamburger
- D. Hot dog

22.



- A. Cuttlefish
- B. Squid
- C. Starfish
- D. Seahorse

23.



- A. Iced coffee
- B. Iced Tea
- C. Iced lemon tea
- D. Iced chocolate



24.



- A. Lemon
- B. Pear
- C. Apple
- D. Pineapple

25.



- A. Lettuce
- B. Mushroom
- C. Spinach
- D. Garlic

26.



- A. Crab
- B. Clam
- C. Shrimp
- D. Fish

27.



- A. Vase
- B. Cup
- C. Glass
- D. Bottle

28.



- A. Papaya
- B. Grapefruit
- C. Pumpkin
- D. Tomato

29.



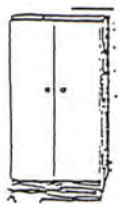
- A. Coffee
- B. Tea
- C. Soft drink
- D. Milk shake

30.



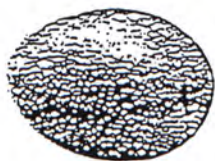
- A. Pumpkin
- B. Papaya
- C. Water melon
- D. Durian

31.



- A. Drawer
- B. Shelf
- C. Cupboard
- D. Blackboard

32.



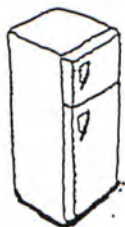
- A. Mangosteen
- B. Sugar apple
- C. Mango
- D. Kiwi fruit

33.



- A. Cauliflower
- B. Broccoli
- C. Cabbage
- D. Potato

34.



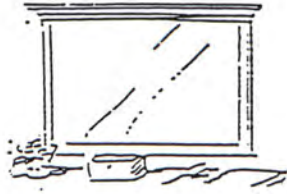
- A. Refrigerator
- B. Air-conditioner
- C. Fan
- D. Oven

35.



- A. Apple
- B. Orange
- C. Pear
- D. Melon

36.



- A. Blanket
- B. Mirror
- C. Rug
- D. Sink

37.



- A. Peach
- B. Orange
- C. Cherry
- D. Grapefruit

38.



- A. Broccoli
- B. Green pea
- C. Cucumber
- D. Cabbage

39.



- A. Lemon
- B. Apple
- C. Orange
- D. Water melon

40.



- A. Potato
- B. Tomato
- C. Eggplant
- D. Cabbage



B. Please fill in the blanks with the words provided.

blouse  
scarf  
sweater  
pajamas

boots  
shirt  
tie  
shorts

jeans  
shoes  
slippers  
sandals

jacket  
skirt  
trainers  
bow tie

overcoat  
socks  
trousers  
hat

1.



\_\_\_\_\_

7.



\_\_\_\_\_

2.



\_\_\_\_\_

8.



\_\_\_\_\_

3.



\_\_\_\_\_

9.



\_\_\_\_\_

4.



\_\_\_\_\_

10.



\_\_\_\_\_

5.



\_\_\_\_\_

6.



\_\_\_\_\_



11 \_\_\_\_\_

12 \_\_\_\_\_

13 \_\_\_\_\_

C. *Banana milk shake* is a very popular drink. Look at the picture to find out how it is made. Then complete the recipe using the words given.

fill  
pour  
peel

get  
switch  
put

give  
cut

steam  
turn

add  
fry

mix  
stir

First, \_\_\_\_\_ a banana and \_\_\_\_\_ the banana.

Then, \_\_\_\_\_ the banana into small pieces.

\_\_\_\_\_ the banana into a blender.

Next, \_\_\_\_\_ the milk into the blender.

\_\_\_\_\_ a little sugar and vanilla ice-cream into the mixture.

Then, \_\_\_\_\_ on the blender.

After about thirty seconds, the blender will \_\_\_\_\_ all the other things together.

\_\_\_\_\_ off the blender.

\_\_\_\_\_ the glass with the milk shake.



Appendix F. 2<sup>nd</sup> post-program test on vocabulary

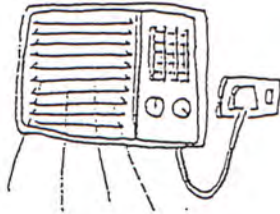
A. Please circle the correct answer

1.



- A. Crab
- B. Clam
- C. Lobster
- D. Scallop

2.



- A. Television
- B. Radio
- C. Cassette recorder
- D. Air-conditioner

3.



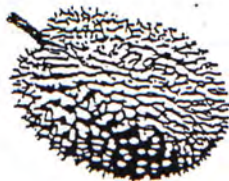
- A. Fried rice
- B. Fish fillets
- C. Hash brown
- D. French fries

4.



- A. Steak
- B. Pork chop
- C. Chicken
- D. Shrimp

5.



- A. Durian
- B. Raspberry
- C. Plum
- D. Pear



6.



- A. Rice cooker
- B. Oven
- C. Freezer
- D. Blender

7.



- A. Tea
- B. Coffee
- C. Milk
- D. Milk shake

8.



- A. Lobster
- B. Crab
- C. Scallop
- D. Shrimp

9.



- A. French fries
- B. Apple pie
- C. Cheeseburger
- D. Sandwich

10.



- A. Garlic
- B. Lettuce
- C. Eggplant
- D. Corn

11.



- A. Orange juice
- B. Soft drinks
- C. Beer
- D. Wine

12.



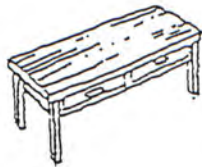
- A. Lamb
- B. Beef
- C. Pork chop
- D. Chicken

13.



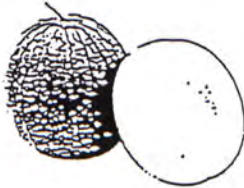
- A. Mushroom
- B. Potato
- C. Tomato
- D. Onion

14.



- A. Desk
- B. Table
- C. Cupboard
- D. Bed

15.



- A. Water melon
- B. Honey dew melon
- C. Coconut
- D. Avocado

16.



- A. Clam
- B. Fish
- C. Crab
- D. Prawn

17.



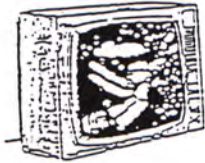
- A. Milk shake
- B. Twist cone
- C. Sundae
- D. Coke

18.



- A. Peaches
- B. Tomatoes
- C. Grapes
- D. Cherries

19.



- A. Television
- B. Radio
- C. Iron
- D. Computer

20.



- A. Tomato
- B. Corn
- C. Potato
- D. Onion

21.



- A. Bread
- B. Pizza
- C. Hamburger
- D. Hot dog

22.



- A. Cuttlefish
- B. Squid
- C. Starfish
- D. Seahorse

23.



- A. Iced coffee
- B. Iced Tea
- C. Iced lemon tea
- D. Iced chocolate



24.



- A. Lemon
- B. Pear
- C. Apple
- D. Pineapple

25.



- A. Lettuce
- B. Mushroom
- C. Spinach
- D. Garlic

26.



- A. Crab
- B. Clam
- C. Shrimp
- D. Fish

27.



- A. Vase
- B. Cup
- C. Glass
- D. Bottle

28.



- A. Papaya
- B. Grapefruit
- C. Pumpkin
- D. Tomato

29.



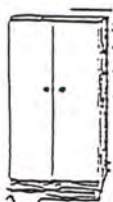
- A. Coffee
- B. Tea
- C. Soft drink
- D. Milk shake

30.



- A. Pumpkin
- B. Papaya
- C. Water melon
- D. Durian

31.



- A. Drawer
- B. Shelf
- C. Cupboard
- D. Blackboard

32.



- A. Mangosteen
- B. Sugar apple
- C. Mango
- D. Kiwi fruit

33.



- A. Cauliflower
- B. Broccoli
- C. Cabbage
- D. Potato

34.



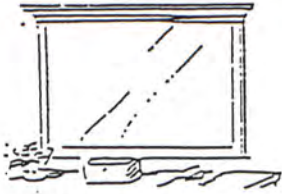
- A. Refrigerator
- B. Air-conditioner
- C. Fan
- D. Oven

35.



- A. Apple
- B. Orange
- C. Pear
- D. Melon

36.



- A. Blanket
- B. Mirror
- C. Rug
- D. Sink

37.



- A. Peach
- B. Orange
- C. Cherry
- D. Grapefruit

38.



- A. Broccoli
- B. Green pea
- C. Cucumber
- D. Cabbage

39.



- A. Lemon
- B. Apple
- C. Orange
- D. Water melon

40.



- A. Potato
- B. Tomato
- C. Eggplant
- D. Cabbage



B. Please fill in the blanks with the words provided.

blouse  
scarf  
sweater  
pajamas

boots  
shirt  
tie  
shorts

jeans  
shoes  
slippers  
sandals

jacket  
skirt  
trainers  
bow tie

overcoat  
socks  
trousers  
hat

1.



\_\_\_\_\_

7.



\_\_\_\_\_

2.



\_\_\_\_\_

8.



\_\_\_\_\_

3.



\_\_\_\_\_

9.



\_\_\_\_\_

4.



\_\_\_\_\_

10.



\_\_\_\_\_

5.



\_\_\_\_\_

6.



\_\_\_\_\_



11 \_\_\_\_\_

12 \_\_\_\_\_

13 \_\_\_\_\_

C. Banana milk shake is a very popular drink. Look at the picture to find out how it is made. Then complete the recipe using the words given.

fill  
pour  
peel

get  
switch  
put

give  
cut

steam  
turn

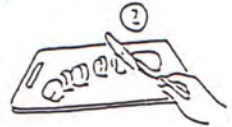
add  
fry

mix  
stir

First, \_\_\_\_\_ a banana and \_\_\_\_\_ the banana.



Then, \_\_\_\_\_ the banana into small pieces.



\_\_\_\_\_ the banana into a blender.



Next, \_\_\_\_\_ the milk into the blender.



\_\_\_\_\_ a little sugar and vanilla ice-cream into the mixture.



Then, \_\_\_\_\_ on the blender.



After about thirty seconds, the blender will \_\_\_\_\_ all the other things together.

\_\_\_\_\_ off the blender.



\_\_\_\_\_ the glass with the milk shake.



**Appendix G.** Opinions towards EFL vocabulary acquisition questionnaire (version for the experimental group)

**Opinions towards EFL vocabulary acquisition questionnaire**

- Please complete the following questionnaire by circling the most appropriate option or printing your answers in the blank spaces.
- This questionnaire will help with research into EFL vocabulary acquisition. Your time and help is greatly appreciate
- All answers will be treated confidentially. Your answers will be used for no other but research purpose only. Do not write your name on the questionnaire.

**Section 1: Background information**

*Please circle when appropriate.*

1. Sex:  
A. Male      B. Female
2. Age:  
A. 10      B. 11      C. 12 or above
3. Years of English learning:  
A. 1-3      B. 4-6      C. 7-9      D. 10 or above

**Section 2: Opinions towards the current methodology of vocabulary teaching in Hong Kong EFL classrooms**

*Please read each statement and circle a number (1, 2, 3, 4 or 5) **TO SHOW HOW YOU THINK THE STATEMENT IS** (1=strongly agree; 2=agree; 3=neutral/neither agree or disagree; 4 =disagree; 5=strongly disagree)*

	Strongly agree			Strongly disagree	
	1	2	3	4	5
1. I learn vocabulary better through the word by word translation method.					
2. I feel comfortable to memorize the definitions of different words.					
3. I enjoy learning vocabulary from word-lists.					



4. I can learn a wide range of words by the synonym-explanation method.	1	2	3	4	5
5. My independent word learning skills can be developed if the word definitions are given by teachers	1	2	3	4	5
6. I am motivated to learn new words by being told all their meanings in forms of synonyms or short definitions.	1	2	3	4	5
7. I manage to use the words I have learned efficiently and appropriately in context.	1	2	3	4	5
8. I can learn a lot of words by memorizing their definitions.	1	2	3	4	5
9. I like to learn words from comprehension passages.	1	2	3	4	5
10. I find the synonym-explanation approach helpful for me to acquire a lot of new words.	1	2	3	4	5

### Section 3: Opinions towards the VSS

	Strongly agree			Strongly disagree	
1. I learn better through the VSS	1	2	3	4	5
2. I enjoy learning new vocabulary by collecting them myself.	1	2	3	4	5
3. I can learn a wide range of words by VSS.	1	2	3	4	5

4. VSS helps to develop my independent word learning skills.	1	2	3	4	5
5. I am motivated to learn new words by VSS.	1	2	3	4	5
6. My sensitivity towards words is enhanced by VSS.	1	2	3	4	5
7. I manage to use the words I have learned efficiently and appropriately in context.	1	2	3	4	5
8. I find the VSS helpful for me to acquire vocabulary.	1	2	3	4	5

#### Section 4: General opinions towards EFL vocabulary acquisition

*Please print your answers in the space provided.*

1. In your opinion, what are the characteristics of an effective approach for EFL vocabulary acquisition?

---



---



---



---

2. What is your opinion towards the traditional grammar-translation approach to vocabulary acquisition?

---



---



---



---

3. How do you feel about the VSS in general?

---



---



---



---

4. Do you find the workshop useful for you to acquire new words in future? If yes, how?

---

---

---

---

**THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR HELP!**



**Appendix H.** Opinions towards EFL vocabulary acquisition questionnaire (version for the control group)

**Opinions towards EFL vocabulary acquisition questionnaire**

- Please complete the following questionnaire by circling the most appropriate option or printing your answers in the blank spaces.
- This questionnaire will help with research into EFL vocabulary acquisition. Your time and help is greatly appreciate
- All answers will be treated confidentially. Your answers will be used for no other but research purpose only. Do not write your name on the questionnaire.

**Section 1: Background information**

*Please circle when appropriate.*

- Sex:  
A. Male      B. Female
- Age:  
A. 10          B. 11          C. 12 or above
- Years of English learning:  
A. 1-3      B. 4-6      C. 7-9      D. 10 or above

**Section 2: Opinions towards the current methodology of vocabulary teaching in Hong Kong EFL classrooms**

*Please read each statement and circle a number (1, 2, 3, 4 or 5) **TO SHOW HOW YOU THINK THE STATEMENT IS** (1=strongly agree; 2=agree; 3=neutral/neither agree or disagree; 4 =disagree; 5=strongly disagree)*

	Strongly agree			Strongly disagree	
	1	2	3	4	5
1. I learn vocabulary better through the word by word translation method.					
2. I feel comfortable to memorize the definitions of different words.					

3. I enjoy learning vocabulary from word-lists.	1	2	3	4	5
4. I can learn a wide range of words by the synonym-explanation method.	1	2	3	4	5
5. My independent word learning skills can be developed if the word definitions are given by teachers	1	2	3	4	5
6. I am motivated to learn new words by being told all their meanings in forms of synonyms or short definitions.	1	2	3	4	5
7. I manage to use the words I have learned efficiently and appropriately in context.	1	2	3	4	5
8. I can learn a lot of words by memorizing their definitions.	1	2	3	4	5
9. I like to learn words from comprehension passages.	1	2	3	4	5
10. I find the synonym-explanation approach helpful for me to acquire a lot of new words.	1	2	3	4	5

### Section 3: General opinions towards EFL vocabulary acquisition

*Please print your answers in the space provided.*

1. In your opinion, what are the characteristics of an effective approach for EFL vocabulary acquisition?

---



---



---



---

2. What is your opinion towards the traditional grammar-translation approach to vocabulary acquisition?

---

---

---

---

3. Do you find the workshop useful for you to acquire new words in future? If yes, how?

---

---

---

---

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR HELP!



## **Appendix I. Interview questions for the experimental group**

### **Interview questions for the experimental group**

1. How is vocabulary taught to you in your English language learning experience?  
What is your opinion towards that?
2. How do you feel about the traditional grammar-translation approach to EFL vocabulary teaching?  
*The following questions will be asked only if the interviewee is not responsive.*
  - Can you learn a lot of words?
  - Can you learn different types of words?
  - Can it help you to develop autonomous word learning skills?
  - Are you able to use the words you have learned efficiently and appropriately in context?
3. Do you enjoy learning words by the Vocabulary Self-collection Strategy (VSS)?
4. Are you more sensitive to the words around you after being introduced the VSS?
5. Can VSS help to develop your independent word learning skills?
6. Have you tried to learn words on your own using the VSS after the workshop?
7. In your opinion, what are the characteristics of an effective approach for EFL vocabulary teaching?

## **Appendix J. Interview questions for the control group**

### **Interview questions for the control group**

1. How is vocabulary taught to you in your English language learning experience?  
What is your opinion towards that?

2. How do you feel about the traditional grammar-translation approach to EFL vocabulary teaching?

*The following questions will be asked only if the interviewee is not responsive.*

- a. Can you learn a lot of words?
- b. Can you learn different types of words?
- c. Can it help you to develop autonomous word learning skills?
- d. Are you able to use the words you have learned efficiently and appropriately in context?

3. In your opinion, what are the characteristics of an effective approach for EFL vocabulary teaching?

Appendix K. Form for field notes taking

Class observation form

Location: \_\_\_\_\_  
Class size: \_\_\_\_\_ ( \_\_\_\_\_ M & \_\_\_\_\_ F)  
Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
Page: \_\_\_\_\_

Time	Observation	Visuals	Inferences (Observer's comments)



**Appendix L.** Interview questions for English teachers

**Interview Form**

Date : \_\_\_\_\_  
Time : \_\_\_\_\_  
Interviewer : \_\_\_\_\_  
Interviewee : \_\_\_\_\_

**Interview questions:**

1. What is your methodology of teaching vocabulary to EFL students? What do the teachers and students usually do during the lesson? What kinds of teaching materials will you usually adopt?
2. What are your opinions towards the ways you teach vocabulary? What difficulties do you experience in teaching vocabulary?
3. In your opinion, what are the students' attitudes towards the ways they are taught?
4. Can you give some comments about the traditional approach to EFL vocabulary teaching which prevails in many EFL classrooms in Hong Kong? (e.g. teaching through bilingual vocabulary list, a heavy emphasis on pronunciation)
5. In your opinion, how can the students develop a rich corpus of vocabulary or mental lexicon?
6. Having been explained the nature of the vocabulary acquisition work shop, do you think it will help the students to learn vocabulary? If yes, how?

## **Appendix M.** Information about the briefing session for the team leaders

### The main aim of the current study:

- To compare the current methodology of vocabulary teaching and the Vocabulary Self-collection Strategy (VSS) on Chinese EFL learners' acquisition of vocabulary

### The treatment to be received by the experimental group:

- The Vocabulary Self-collection Strategy (VSS) – learners are required to collect and gain the meanings of the words on their own

### The goals for the outings:

- To create authentic opportunities for learners to collect vocabulary in their everyday environment
- To let them understand the meanings of words through the process of vocabulary self-collection

### The responsibilities of the group leaders during the outings:

- To manage the disciplines of the groups they are in charge of
- To write field-notes about subjects' learning behavior

### The procedures for vocabulary collection in the three outings:

- Please refer to the Lesson Plan for details

## Appendix N. Transcription of interviews (experimental group)

Date: 13<sup>th</sup> December, 2001

Time: 1:30 pm

Interviewer: Yeung Siu Fung, Betty (I)

Interviewee: Lo Yip Sum (E1)

I: I have a few questions to ask you. The first one is "how is vocabulary taught to you in your language learning experience"?

E1: Spilt the words into different parts to teach us.

I: How?

E1: If the word consists of a lot of letters, teachers will divide the word into different parts and use some similar words to teach us its pronunciation.

I: How about the meaning of the words? What you've said just now was concerned with the pronunciation of the words.

E1: Copy the meanings into notebooks. Teachers would ask us to do so.

I: That means teachers will give you the meanings of the words in Chinese?

E1: Yes.

I: Is it also the way vocabulary was taught in your primary school?

E1: Primary school? Yes.

I: Mmm.....How about the context in which the words appeared? Did the teacher just teach the words she prefer to teach or did they pick the difficult words out from some comprehension passages?

E1: While teachers were teaching, if there were some difficult words, they would ask us to write them down.

I: Mmm....and asked you to read the words and then gave you the meanings of the words in Chinese.

E1: Yes.

I: Would teachers require you to pronounce the words until you can successfully master the pronunciation?

E1: Read a few time.....two or three times.

I: What's your opinion towards the way vocabulary was taught to you?

E1: .....

I: Any opinion will do. For example, do you think it is good or bad? Interesting or boring? Or if you can learn words from it or not?

E1: This method is quite good as it can let us understand words.

I: Understand words. Yes..... Do you find the method boring sometimes?

E1: Yes, sometimes.

I: Why?

E1: Because.....always use this method.....

I: How bored is it? Very monotonous?

E1: Always using the same method.

I: Always using the same method, there is no variation?

E1: Yes.

I: The second question. How do you feel about the traditional grammar-translation



- approach to EFL vocabulary teaching? Let me explain what does it mean by the traditional grammar-translation approach first. For example, the use of bilingual wordlists, the adoption of Chinese to explain word meanings and also a heavy emphasis on pronunciation. What's your opinion towards this approach?
- E1: It's difficult to put the words into application.
- I: Difficult to put them in real application. Then can you remember the words you've learned?
- E1: Sometimes not.
- I: Can you learn different types of words?
- E1: Sometimes.
- I: Can this method help you develop autonomous word learning skills?
- E1: .....
- I: Do you understand what the question means? That means will you take the initiative to learn words on your own outside class?
- E1: No.
- I: When writing composition, are you able to use the words you have learned efficiently and appropriately in context?
- E1: No.
- I: No. You always forget the words you've learned?
- E1: Yes.
- I: How do you feel about the acquisition workshop?
- E1: I can learn a lot of words related to our daily lives.
- I: Have you ever paid attention to those words before?
- E1: No.
- I: Does the workshop change the way you learn vocabulary?
- E1: A bit.
- I: How?
- E1: I will not learn words by rote-memorization.
- I: Then how will you learn?
- E1: .....
- I: Will you pay more attention to the words around you? And understand that there are a lot of words in our surrounding environment also. Even when you go to the supermarkets, if you are sensitive enough, you can also learn a lot of words. Is your sensitivity towards words raised after the workshop?
- E1: Yes.
- I: I see. Then do you enjoy learning words by the Vocabulary Self-collection Strategy (VSS)?
- E1: Quite.
- I: Why? Why do you like it?
- E1: Through activities, we can learn a lot of words by ourselves.
- I: After the workshop, have you tried to learn words on your own using the VSS?
- E1: .....
- I: Are you more sensitive towards the words in your surrounding environment?
- E1: Sometimes.....but I seldom go out.

- I: But you think that you will pay more attention to words around you in future.
- E1: Yes.
- I: Can VSS help to develop your independent word learning skills?
- E1: .....
- I: Do you understand the question? That means if the VSS can help you learn words on your own?
- E1: Yes.
- I: Yes. Why?
- E1: Er.....
- I: Is that because you learned that there are ways in which you can learn words by yourselves? Since if you are sensitive enough, you can learn a lot of words.
- E1: Yes.
- I: In your opinion, what are the characteristics of an effective approach for EFL vocabulary teaching?
- E1: There should be some activities to raise our consciousness towards the words happen around us so that we can learn more English vocabulary.
- I: Mmm..... What give you the most difficulty in vocabulary learning?
- E1: The difficulty is.....
- I: The biggest difficulty .....
- E1: The biggest difficulty is that sometimes I forget the words I have learned. There are too many words to learn.
- I: You always forget the words you have learned.
- E1: There are too many words. It is difficult to remember all of them.
- I: Mmm..... Will you find difficulty in using words with multiple meanings?
- E1: Yes. Some words can be used as both nouns and verbs. Therefore, it is sometimes difficult to decide which word to use.
- I: It's the end of the interview, thanks a lot for your help.



Date: 13<sup>th</sup> December, 2001

Time: 1:45 pm

Interviewer: Yeung Siu Fung, Betty (I)

Interviewee: Lam Pak Yan, Byran (E2)

- I: I have a few questions that I would like to ask you. How is vocabulary taught to you in your English language learning experience? For instance, in primary or secondary schools?
- E2: Teachers teach the vocabulary and give us their meanings.
- I: Are the meanings in Chinese or English?
- E2: Chinese.
- I: Chinese. Then under what context do teachers introduce the vocabulary to you?
- E2: From the comprehension passages in our textbooks.
- I: Can you describe the process?
- E2: First, teachers ask us to read the whole passage once. If they find that there are words which we don't know, they will write the words on the blackboard.
- I: Mmm..... and then tell you the meanings.
- E2: Yes.
- I: Was there any dictation?
- E2: Yes.
- I: Would teachers ask you to pronounce the words until you know their pronunciation?
- E2: Yes.
- I: What is your opinion towards this teaching methodology?
- E2: English instead of Chinese should be used to explain the meanings of the words.
- I: Then how do you feel about the methodology?
- E2: Which one?
- I: Teachers'.
- E2: Average.
- I: Average. Any more?
- E2: The teachers' explanation is not very clear.
- I: Even when Chinese is used?
- E2: Yes.
- I: Mmm..... Will you find this method interesting or boring?
- E2: Sometimes it's boring.
- I: Boring. Why?
- E2: Only teach us words but it's not funny.
- I: Not funny..... Here comes the second question. How do you feel about the traditional grammar-translation approach to EFL vocabulary teaching? Let me explain what does it mean by the traditional grammar-translation approach first. For example, the use of bilingual wordlists, the adoption of Chinese to explain word meanings and also a heavy emphasis on pronunciation. What's your opinion towards this approach?
- E2: If we know the pronunciation of words, it is useful if we go abroad. However, using Chinese to explain meaning may cause misunderstanding. For instance, I



- may mix up the meanings of the words "hit" and "hurt".
- I: Anymore?
- E2: Not actually.
- I: Can this methodology help you learn a lot of words?
- E2: Yes.
- I: Will you find it interesting or monotonous?
- E2: Quite monotonous. Teachers should play more games with us.
- I: Can this method help you to develop autonomous word learning skills? Will you learn words when you have time or outside class?
- E2: No.
- I: Are you able to use the words you have learned efficiently and appropriately in context?
- E2: Sometimes.
- I: Sometimes. You may forget the words you have learned, right?
- E2: Yes.
- I: How do you feel about the vocabulary acquisition workshop?
- E2: It's quite good. Sometimes we could go out of the classroom to learn words and sometimes it's funny in class.
- I: Does the workshop help you in your learning of vocabulary?
- E2: Yes. In the past, I even didn't know the English equivalents of the food sold in Mcdonald's.
- I: Yes, we always don't know we can learn a lot of words from our surrounding easily. Does the workshop change the way you learn vocabulary?
- E2: Mmm.....yes.
- I: How then?
- E2: ..... be more sensitive.....read more books.....more activities.....
- I: Are you more sensitive towards the words around you now?
- E2: Yes.
- I: I see, then do you enjoy learning words by the Vocabulary Self-collection Strategy (VSS)?
- E2: Yes.
- I: Why?
- E2: Since it's quite interesting.
- I: Interesting. Have you tried to learn words on your own using VSS after the workshop?
- E2: Sometimes.
- I: Sometimes..... How? Can you tell me? For instance, when and where?
- E2: When I had buffets.....the names of the dishes.
- I: I see. When you have buffets, the names of the food are always displayed in front of the dishes. For example, the name "salmon", right? You had not noticed that before but now you are more aware of that.
- E2: Mmm.
- I: Can VSS help to develop your independent word learning skills?
- E2: Yes.
- I: Yes. In your opinion, what are the characteristics of an effective approach for

EFL vocabulary teaching?

E2: It should be interesting and games should be included so that we can learn words.

I: Games.....so that you can learn words.

E2: Yes.

I: What give you the most difficulty in vocabulary learning?

E2: Sometimes I don't know how to use the words and don't understand their meanings.

I: Don't understand the meanings.....How about the application of words? When you write compositions?

E2: Sometimes I need to ask my mother for help.

I: Ask your mother! Even if you've learned the words, you cannot remember them sometimes. Is that what you mean?

E2: Yes.

I: Mmm. Any other difficulty? Can't remember the meanings, don't remember the words even though you've learned them before. Any other?

E2: For some words, I know their meanings in Chinese but I can't remember their spellings and pronunciation.

I: Understand the meaning but don't know the spelling and pronunciation. I see.

E2: Yes.

I: That's the end of the interview. Thanks a lot for your help.



Date: 14<sup>th</sup> December, 2001

Time: 1:15pm

Interviewer: Yeung Siu Fung, Betty (I)

Interviewee: Kut Ka Man (E3)

I: The first question is, in your English learning experience, how do teachers teach you vocabulary?

E3: Er.....they usually use some pictures and tell us the names of the things in the pictures.

I: Using pictures.....how about comprehension passages?

E3: Seldom.

I: Seldom..... do teachers require you to read the words repeatedly until you know their pronunciation?

E3: Yes.

I: Yes. Then, is there any dictation of the words you've learned?

E3: Yes.

I: What is your opinion towards this teaching method?

E3: I think it's quite boring.

I: Quite boring.....but can you learn any words?

E3: Yes.

I: Boring but you can learn some words.

E3: Yes.

I: Mmm ..... How do you feel about the traditional grammar-translation approach to EFL vocabulary teaching? Let me explain what does it mean by the traditional grammar-translation approach first. For example, the use of bilingual wordlists, the adoption of Chinese to explain word meanings and also a heavy emphasis on pronunciation. What's your opinion towards this approach?

E3: It's a bit boring but I can still understand.

I: Quite boring but you can understand.....Mmm.....do you think it is good to use Chinese to explain word meaning?

E3: It's easy to understand.

I: Can this teaching method help you to develop autonomous word learning skills?

E3: Yes.

I: Do you understand what's meant by autonomous word learning skills? That means you learn words outside class.

E3: Yes.

I: Yes, you will. OK. Then are you able to use the words you have learned efficiently and appropriately in when writing compositions?

E3: Er....sometimes.

I: Then what are the difficulties?

E3: I always forget their spellings.

I: Forget the spellings. That means you know the words but forget their spellings.

E3: Mmm...

I: How do you feel about the vocabulary acquisition workshop



E3: I'll try to find some words to learn.  
 I: How?  
 E3: Go to supermarkets.  
 I: Mmm.....does the workshop change the way you learn vocabulary?  
 E3: Yes.  
 I: How?  
 E3: I know that there are some ways to learn words on our own.  
 I: Do you enjoy learning words by the Vocabulary Self-collection Strategy (VSS)?  
 E3: Yes.  
 I: Why?  
 E3: It's easy to manage?  
 I: Any other reasons?  
 E3: ..... I have developed the habit .....  
 I: What habit?  
 E3: I become more sensitive to words.  
 I: Have you tried to learn words on your own using VSS after the workshop?  
 E3: Yes.  
 I: Are you more sensitive to the words around you after being introduced the VSS?  
 E3: Yes.  
 I: Can VSS help to develop your independent word learning skills?  
 E3: Yes.  
 I: How? For instance?  
 E3: I become more alert to the words around me.  
 I: What do you think are the characteristics of an effective approach for EFL vocabulary teaching?  
 E3: It shouldn't be so boring but more interesting.  
 I: Anything else?  
 E3: Teachers should use more Chinese so that it's easier for students to understand.  
 I: What is your biggest difficulty in learning vocabulary?  
  
 E3: I don't know how to spell the words.  
 I: Anything else?  
 E3: I don't know the pronunciation.  
 I: You don't know the spellings and pronunciations.  
 E3: Yes.  
 I: Ok. That's the end of the interview. Thanks a lot for your help.

Date: 14<sup>th</sup> December, 2001

Time: 1:35pm

Interviewer: Yeung Siu Fung, Betty (I)

Interviewee: Chan Ka Yan (E4)

I: The first question I'd like to ask is, in your English learning experience, how do teachers teach you vocabulary?

E4: Teachers pick up the words from textbooks.

I: Textbooks.....you mean from the passages.

E4: Yes.

I: How to pick up? Every word or some other ways?

E4: They usually choose some new and difficult words and tell us the meanings.

I: How?

E4: First of all, they teach us how to pronounce the words. Then they tell us the meanings.

I: Are the meanings in Chinese or English?

E4: Chinese.

I: Chinese meanings..... do they ask you to read the words repeatedly?

E4: Yes.

I: Is there dictation?

E4: Yes.

I: What is your opinion towards this teaching method?

E4: I think this can let us learn some words and their meanings.

I: How do you find this method? Interesting or boring?

E4: Interesting.

I: Ok. The second question is, how do you feel about the traditional grammar-translation approach to EFL vocabulary teaching? Let me explain what does it mean by the traditional grammar-translation approach first. For example, the use of bilingual wordlists, the adoption of Chinese to explain word meanings and also a heavy emphasis on pronunciation. What's your opinion towards this approach?

E4: I think it is very boring.

I: Boring. Why?

E4: It's because all the meanings are given in Chinese only. I think we'll learn better if the explanation is given in English.

I: I see .....do you think the above method can help to develop your autonomous word learning skills? Do you understand the meaning of the term "autonomous word learning skills"? Yes.

E4: No, it can't.

I: Why?

E4: It's because the range of words we can learn is not very wide.

I: I see. Can you use the words you have learned efficiently and appropriately in context?

E4: Yes.



I: How do you feel about the vocabulary acquisition workshop?

E4: I can learn different types of words around me.

I: Mmm.....anything else?

E4: I learn how to collect words on my own.

I: You've known how to learn words by yourselves.

E4: Yes.

I: Does the workshop change the way you learn vocabulary?

E4: Yes.

I: How?

E4: For instance, when I go to supermarkets. I am now more sensitive to the names of the things sold there. I look at their spellings and try to remember their meanings.

I: Do you enjoy learning words by the VSS?

E4: Yes.

I: Why?

E4: It can let us know more words.

I: Ok. Have you tried to learn words on your own using the VSS after the workshop?

E4: Yes.

I: For example? When and where?

E4: During holidays, I went to supermarkets.

I: Are you more sensitive to the words around you after being introduced the VSS?

E4: Yes.

I: In your opinion, what are the characteristics of an effective approach for EFL vocabulary teaching?

E4: First of all, it should let students understand the meanings of words and English explanation should be given.

I: What gives you the most difficulty in vocabulary learning?

E4: It's very time-consuming to search for the meanings of words by myself.

I: Then how can it be improved?

E4: If we can really understand what the teachers teach us in class, then we don't need to spend extra time searching for their meanings.

I: Anything else?

E4: No.

I: Thanks very much for your help.



Date: 14<sup>th</sup> December, 2001

Time: 1:55pm

Interviewer: Yeung Siu Fung, Betty (I)

Interviewee: Chong Ka Man (E5)

I: I have some questions concerning the teaching and learning of English vocabulary which I would like to ask you. Please feel free to express your opinions. The first question is, how is vocabulary taught to you in your English language learning experience

E5: Some interactive techniques.....For example, they bring in some pictures.

I: Pictures.....anything else apart from pictures? Do they use passages in textbooks?

E5: Computer.....they seldom follow the passages in textbooks.

I: Ok. What procedures do teachers adopt in teaching vocabulary? For example, pictures?

E5: If they use pictures, they bring in some pictures and ask if we know the names of the things in the pictures. Then, they tell us the pronunciation.

I: How about the explanation?

E5: They just tell us the meaning.

I: I see. Now, you are in secondary one, how do teachers teach the difficult words in textbooks?

E5: Difficult words.....teachers teach us the pronunciation of the words and then tell us the meaning.

I: Do they use Chinese while explaining the words?

E5: Yes.

I: Do they require you to repeat the words until you know how to pronounce them?

E5: Only for those new vocabulary.

I: Is there dictation.

E5: Yes.

I: What is your opinions towards this teaching method?

E5: I think it is good.

I: How good is it?

E5: It lets us easy to understand.

I: Understand. Then do you find this method boring or interesting?

E5: Quite good.

I: How do you feel about the traditional grammar-translation approach to EFL vocabulary teaching? Let me explain what does it mean by the traditional grammar-translation approach first. For example, the use of bilingual wordlists, the adoption of Chinese to explain word meanings and also a heavy emphasis on pronunciation. What's your opinion towards this approach?

E5: It's very troublesome since we have to repeat the words several times even though some students already know the pronunciation.

I: Apart from pronunciation, do you have some other opinions?

E5: Sometimes, I find it boring.

I: Can this method help to develop your autonomous word learning skills? That

means you will learn words outside class.

E5: No.

I: I see. Then, are you able to use the words you have learned efficiently and appropriately in context?

E5: Sometimes, I can but sometimes I remember only the pronunciation but not the spelling.

I: How do you feel about the vocabulary acquisition workshop?

E5: I think it's quite interesting.

I: How?

E5: We could learn words on our own and then you would teach us the pronunciation in the follow-up activities.

I: How about the meaning of words? Can you acquire the meanings of words through collecting them yourself?

E5: I can see the real objects when I collect the words.

I: Will you have a deeper impression?

E5: Yes.

I: Does the workshop change the way you learn vocabulary?

E5: Yes.

I: How?

E5: In the past, I learned words from textbooks but now I collect words on my own. I can have a deeper impression of the words I collected.

I: Deeper impression.....then do you enjoy learning words by the VSS?

E5: Yes.

I: Why?

E5: It's also because I can have a deeper impression of the words.

I: Anything else?

E5: I am more aware of the words around me.

I: I see. Have you tried to learn words on your own using the VSS after the workshop?

E5: Sometimes.

I: For example?

E5: When I went to the supermarket to buy something for my mother. I paid attention to the words there.

I: In your opinion, what are the characteristics of an effective approach for EFL vocabulary teaching?

E5: I shouldn't bore the students. It should be more interesting.

I: What is your greatest difficulty in vocabulary teaching?

E5: I can't remember the pronunciation and spelling.

I: That's the end of the interview. Thanks a lot for your help.



Date: 15<sup>th</sup> December, 2001

Time: 1:15pm

Interviewer: Yeung Siu Fung, Betty (I)

Interviewee: Choi Chi Cheong (E6)

I: I have some questions concerning the teaching and learning of English vocabulary which I would like to ask you. Please feel free to express your opinions. The first question is, how is vocabulary taught to you in your English language learning experience?

E6: When they think of some words, they write them down and teach us.

I: Any other methods?

E6: Textbooks.

I: Textbooks.

E6: Or sometimes students ask them.

I: What methods do they adopt when teaching words?

E6: Sometimes, they ask us to look up the words in dictionaries or they tell us the meaning.

I: Is the meaning in Chinese?

E6: Yes.

I: Do they require you to repeat the words until you know how to pronounce them?

E6: Sometimes.

I: What is your opinion towards this teaching method?

E6: It's very difficult to learn the Chinese meaning.

I: What do you mean?

E6: It's very hard to remember the meaning of words. If we look up the meanings of the words ourselves, it's easier for us to remember.

I: Why?

E6: Since we'll have a deeper impression.

I: How do you feel about the traditional grammar-translation approach to EFL vocabulary teaching? Let me explain what does it mean by the traditional grammar-translation approach first. For example, the use of bilingual wordlists, the adoption of Chinese to explain word meanings and also a heavy emphasis on pronunciation. What's your opinion towards this approach?

E6: I think ..... repeating the words several times may help us to learn the pronunciation.

I: Mmm .....Do you find it interesting or boring?

E6: Boring.

I: You think it is boring?

E6: Yes .....I think sentences should be used to express the meanings.

I: Using sentences. Then, do you think this method can help to develop your autonomous word-learning skills?

E6: Maybe but it's not very effective.

I: Are you able to use the words you have learned efficiently and appropriately in context?



E6: No.

I: Why? What difficulties do you have?

E6: For some meanings, I cannot remember.

I: You can't remember the meanings.

E6: Or I don't know how to use prepositions.

I: I see. How do you feel about the vocabulary acquisition workshop?

E6: Opinions ..... I understand how to learn words.

I: You understand how you can learn English vocabulary.

E6: There are some other ways to learn words.

I: Ok. Does the workshop change the way you learn vocabulary?

E6: Yes.

I: How?

E6: When I go out, I am now more aware of the words in my surrounding environment. I try to remember them and learn them.

I: Do you enjoy learning words by the VSS?

E6: Quite.

I: Why?

E6: It's because the words that can be learned are limited to the words found in shops.

I: Have you tried to learn words on your own using the VSS after the workshop?

E6: Yes.

I: Are you more sensitive to the words around you after being introduced the VSS?

E6: Yes.

I: Do you think the VSS can help to develop your independent word-learning skills?

E6: Yes.

I: In your opinion, what are the characteristics of an effective approach for EFL vocabulary teaching?

E6: It should let students thoroughly understand the meanings of the words.

I: Do you have any suggestions?

E6: More interactive.

I: More interactive.

E6: Yes .....something like that.

I: Ok. The last question is, what gives you the most difficulty in vocabulary learning?

E6: The differences between the two languages. Between English and Chinese.

I: Differences between the two languages.

E6: The meaning of English sentences sometimes cannot be fully explained by Chinese.

I: Do you mean that sometimes you do not know which English words should be used to express the Chinese meaning?

E6: Yes.

I: That's the end of the interview, thank you for your help.

Date: 15<sup>th</sup> December, 2001

Time: 1:35pm

Interviewer: Yeung Siu Fung, Betty (I)

Interviewee: Lam Kin Tat (E7)

I: The first question I would like to ask is, how is vocabulary taught to you in your English language learning experience?

E7: Teachers usually ask us to explain the meanings of words and then remember them.

I: Then how do they teach you words during lessons?

E7: They explain the meanings of words and then illustrate the meanings by some sentences.

I: How about the context in which the words appear?

E7: They are usually from textbooks, worksheets or somewhere else.

I: When explaining words, do they use Chinese?

E7: Some of them use Chinese, some other don't.

I: Do they require you to repeat the words several times until you know how to pronounce them?

E7: Sometimes.

I: What is your opinion towards this teaching method?

E7: It's quite monotonous.

I: Anything else?

E7: Sometimes it is very easy to forget the words if teachers only ask us to pronounce the words repeatedly.

I: How do you feel about the traditional grammar-translation approach to EFL vocabulary teaching? Let me explain what does it mean by the traditional grammar-translation approach first. For example, the use of bilingual wordlists, the adoption of Chinese to explain word meanings and also a heavy emphasis on pronunciation. What's your opinion towards this approach?

E7: Opinions.....

I: Do you think it is good or bad?

E7: It's good in some aspects and bad in certain aspects.

I: How?

E7: Concerning the advantages, sometimes we can remember the pronunciation of words but we are easily confused.

I: Anything else?

E7: It's quite monotonous.

I: Do you think you can learn a lot of words using this approach?

E7: Er ..... not too much.

I: Then do you think it can help to develop your autonomous word-learning skills?

E7: Yes.

I: Are you able to use the words you have learned efficiently and appropriately in context?

E7: Yes.



I: You always can do it?

E7: Not always ..... but for most of the time.

I: Mmm ..... how do you feel about the vocabulary acquisition workshop?

E7: Sometimes I didn't understand the worksheets.

I: Then, why didn't you ask if you didn't understand? Do you have any other opinions?

E7: No.

I: Does the workshop change the way you learn vocabulary?

E7: Yes.

I: How?

E7: I can learn words by myself.

I: Learn by yourself ..... do you enjoy learning words by the VSS?

E7: Yes.

I: Why?

E7: It's because I can learn the words which teachers may not teach us.

I: I see. Then, have you tried to learn words on your own using the VSS after the workshop?

E7: Yes.

I: How? Can you give an example?

E7: For instance, when I had dinner in restaurants, I would pay attention to the words in the menus and try to remember them.

I: Are you more sensitive to the words around you after being introduced the VSS?

E7: Yes.

I: Then, can this method help to develop your independent word learning skills?

E7: Yes.

I: In your opinion, what are the characteristics of an effective approach for EFL vocabulary teaching?

E7: It should enable students to learn words through different means.

I: For example?

E7: Teachers should ask us to do some worksheets or construct some sentences. The method should not be boring.

I: Mmm ..... then what gives you the most difficulty in vocabulary learning?

E7: Er ..... sometimes I cannot find the meanings of the words from dictionaries.

I: Anything else?

E7: No .....

I: Ok. Thanks a lot.



Date: 15<sup>th</sup> December, 2001

Time: 1:55pm

Interviewer: Yeung Siu Fung, Betty (I)

Interviewee: Mo Wing Yan (E8)

I: I have a few questions which I would like to ask you, the first one is, how is vocabulary taught to you in your English language learning experience?

E8: They use English and Chinese.

I: Do they use passages?

E8: Yes.

I: Using passages from textbooks?

E8: Yes.

I: Do they require you to repeat the words several times until you know how to pronounce them?

E8: Er ..... yes.

I: What is your opinion towards this teaching method?

E8: I think it is quite good.

I: Why?

E8: It's easy to remember.

I: Easy to remember. How do you feel about the traditional grammar-translation approach to EFL vocabulary teaching? Let me explain what does it mean by the traditional grammar-translation approach first. For example, the use of bilingual wordlists, the adoption of Chinese to explain word meanings and also a heavy emphasis on pronunciation. What's your opinion towards this approach?

E8: It's quite boring.

I: Anything else?

E8: .....

I: Can you learn a lot of words?

E8: Maybe.

I: Then do you think this method can help you to develop autonomous word learning skills?

E8: Sometimes.

I: Sometimes ..... but not very often. Then, are you able to use the words you have learned efficiently and appropriately in context?

E8: Only if I can remember the words.

I: Mmm ..... that means you always can't remember how to use the words and the spelling although you have already learned the words.

E8: Yes.

I: How do you feel about the vocabulary acquisition workshop?

E8: I think it's quite good.

I: How?

E8: I can learn more English.

I: How can it help the learning of vocabulary?

E8: It's more convenient.

I: Why?

- E8: Since there's someone who taught us.
- I: Does the workshop change the way you learn vocabulary?
- E8: A little bit.
- I: How is that?
- E8: I am more interested in learning English.
- I: Then are you more interested in learning vocabulary?
- E8: Yes.
- I: Do you enjoy learning words by the VSS?
- E8: Quite.
- I: Why?
- E8: Er ..... I don't know.
- I: Have you tried to learn words on your own using the VSS after the workshop?
- E8: Yes.
- I: When? For example?
- E8: When I remember, I use the VSS.
- I: Are you more sensitive to the words around you after being introduced the VSS?
- E8: Yes.
- I: Can VSS help to develop your independent word learning skills? That means you don't need to rely too much on teachers.
- E8: Yes
- I: In your opinion, what are the characteristics of an effective approach for EFL vocabulary teaching?
- E8: It should be more interesting.
- I: Anything else?
- E8: Er .....
- I: Then, how do you find the way you are taught vocabulary now?
- E8: It's quite boring.
- I: What gives you the most difficulty in vocabulary learning?
- E8: I always have to look up the meaning of words in dictionaries.
- I: Any other things?
- E8: We always have to read a lot of books.
- I: You don't like reading?
- E8: Yes.
- I: However, the VSS lets you acquire the meanings of the words vividly on your own, so you think it is quite effective, right?
- E8: Yes.
- I: Ok. That's the end of the interview, thank you for your help.



Date: 16<sup>th</sup> December, 2001

Time: 1:15pm

Interviewer: Yeung Siu Fung, Betty (I)

Interviewee: Pui Sze Chun (E9)

- I: I have some questions concerning the learning of English vocabulary which I would like to ask you. Please feel free to express your opinions. Ok. The first question is, how is vocabulary taught to you in your English language learning experience?
- E9: If there are words we don't understand or words that teachers come up with while teaching, they write them on the blackboard and teach us.
- I: Then what kinds of teaching materials do they use?
- E9: If we have words that we don't understand, we can ask them.
- I: Do they use comprehension passages in textbooks to teach vocabulary?
- E9: Yes.
- I: How do they teach the vocabulary in the passages?
- E9: First, they ask us to read the passage.
- I: Read the passage.
- E9: Then, if there are words that we don't know how to pronounce, they teach us those words together with their meanings.
- I: How do they explain the meanings of words?
- E9: Using English.
- I: Do they use Chinese?
- E9: Only when I was in primary school.
- I: Do they require you to repeat the words several times until you know how to pronounce them?
- E9: Repeat three times.
- I: What is your opinion towards this teaching method?
- E9: I think it is quite good.
- I: Why?
- E9: It lets us more familiar with the pronunciation and meanings of words.
- I: How about the meanings? Can you remember the meanings?
- E9: I would write down the meanings.
- I: How do you feel about the traditional grammar-translation approach to EFL vocabulary teaching? Let me explain what does it mean by the traditional grammar-translation approach first. For example, the use of bilingual wordlists, the adoption of Chinese to explain word meanings and also a heavy emphasis on pronunciation. What's your opinion towards this approach?
- E9: Er .....
- I: Any opinions?
- E9: I think ..... I think it's quite good .....
- I: Why?
- E9: We can be more familiarize with .....
- I: How?
- E9: ..... familiar with the pronunciation.



- I: Then will you find that the meanings of words would be easily forgotten since there are a lots of words.
- E9: It's possible.
- I: Also, the meanings are given by teachers, so you may not have a very deeper impression of the words, right?
- E9: Yes.
- I: Do you think this teaching methodology can help you to develop autonomous word learning skills?
- E9: I always look up words from the dictionaries.
- I: Then are you able to use the words you have learned efficiently and appropriately in context?
- E9: Only for some of the words.
- I: That means sometimes you can't?
- E9: Sometimes I can't remember the spellings of words.
- I: I see. Ok. How do you feel about the vocabulary acquisition workshop?
- E9: Er ... I think the range of the words introduced can be broadened.
- I: I see. Since we have time constraints. Then do you think it can help you?
- E9: Yes.
- I: Does the workshop change the way you learn vocabulary?
- E9: Yes.
- I: How?
- E9: I am more sensitive to the words around me.
- I: Do you enjoy learning words by the VSS?
- E9: Yes only when I have time.
- I: After the workshop, are you more sensitive to words around you?
- E9: A little bit.
- I: Then have you tried to learn words on your own using the VSS after the workshop? In fact, we do not need to spare extra time to collect words. The rationale of VSS is that word learning can be taken place anytime anywhere, even when we are not intentionally want to do it. For example, when we are going to take a bus, you may learn the word "bus-stop" when you are waiting for the bus. Then, do you think VSS can make you more sensitive to words?
- E9: Yes.
- I: Then have you tried to learn words using VSS after the workshop?
- E9: If I don't know certain types of words, I will pay more attention to those words.
- I: Can VSS help to develop your independent word learning skills? That means you don't always have to rely on the teachers but you can learn words on your own.
- E9: Yes.
- I: Ok. In your opinion, what are the characteristics of an effective approach for EFL vocabulary teaching?
- E9: I should be ..... a combination of the traditional and the VSS. Teachers teaching some words during lessons and students are more aware of the words in their surrounding environment.
- I: The last question is, what gives you the most difficulty in vocabulary learning?
- E9: I always forget the spellings of words.

- I: Forget the spellings.
- E9: I won't recite their spellings intentionally. I only try to remember their meanings.
- I: Mmm ..... that means you always remember the words but don't know their meanings. Do you have any other difficulties?
- E9: Er ..... not much ..... or sometimes I don't know how to use the words.
- I: Does it mean that you find difficulties when a word has multiple meanings?
- E9: Yes.
- I: That's the end of the interview. Thank you very much for your help.



Date: 16<sup>th</sup> December, 2001

Time: 1:35pm

Interviewer: Yeung Siu Fung, Betty (I)

Interviewee: Ho Pui Yee (E10)

I: I have a few questions concerning the learning of English vocabulary that I would like to ask you. The first one is, how is vocabulary taught to you in your English language learning experience?

E10: Teachers teach us using textbooks.

I: How's that?

E10: Er ..... they teach us the pronunciation and meanings of words if we don't know.

I: How do teachers teach a word?

E10: First, they teach us how to pronounce the word.

I: How many times do they need you to repeat the words?

E10: Er ..... two or three times.

I: Mmm ..... how about the explanation of words?

E10: They explain the meaning directly.

I: How?

E10: Using Chinese but in secondary school, the teacher sometimes use English to explain once and then use Chinese to explain again.

I: Mmm ..... then how do you feel about this teaching method?

E10: It's quite good ..... but it may not be that clear if English is always used for explanation.

I: How do you feel about the traditional grammar-translation approach to EFL vocabulary teaching? Let me explain what does it mean by the traditional grammar-translation approach first. For example, the use of bilingual wordlists, the adoption of Chinese to explain word meanings and also a heavy emphasis on pronunciation. What's your opinion towards this approach?

E10: .....

I: Do you think it's good? Can you learn a lot of words from that?

E10: Maybe ..... but .....

I: But what?

E10: If the traditional method is used, sometimes we may not know the meanings of individual words in a sentence.

I: Then do you have any suggestions?

E10: It's better to teach words individually. For instance, it's better for teachers to pick up all the difficult words in a passage and teach each of the words to us one by one.

I: Mmm ..... then can you learn different types of words through this method?

E10: But ..... we may not be able to learn certain types of words.

I: I see. Can it help you to develop autonomous word learning skills?

E10: Yes.

I: That means it will make you learn words outside class?

E10: Yes.



I: Are you able to use the words you have learned efficiently and appropriately in context?

E10: Sometimes I can but sometimes I can't.

I: How do you feel about the vocabulary acquisition workshop?

E10: It lets us learn words by ourselves.

I: Do you think it's good?

E10: It lets us know to learn words on our own.

I: Does the workshop change the way you learn vocabulary?

E10: I will try my best to learn words that I don't know.

I: Anything else?

E10: No.

I: Do you enjoy learning words by the VSS?

E10: Yes.

I: Why?

E10: I become more aware of the words around me.

I: Have you tried to learn words on your own using the VSS after the workshop?

E10: Sometimes.

I: Are you more sensitive to the words around you after being introduced the VSS?

E10: Yes.

I: Can VSS help to develop your independent word learning skills?

E10: Yes.

I: In your opinion, what are the characteristics of an effective approach for EFL vocabulary teaching?

E10: I think for certain vocabulary, it's necessary for teachers to teach us, but we should also be aware of the words around us.

I: Why?

E10: Since teachers may not be able to cover all the words.

I: I see. That means you can learn the words you are interested in during self-learning?

E10: Yes.

I: The last question is, what gives you the most difficulty in vocabulary learning?

E10: I don't understand the meanings of words.

I: Anything else?

E10: And ..... er ..... I easily forget words.

I: Any other things?

E10: No.

I: That's the end of the interview. Thanks a lot.

## Appendix O. Transcription of interviews (control group)

Date: 17<sup>th</sup> December, 2001

Time: 1:15 pm

Interviewer: Yeung Siu Fung, Betty (I)

Interviewee: Chan Ka Wai (C1)

I: I have some questions concerning the teaching and learning of English vocabulary that I would like to ask you. The first question is, how is vocabulary taught to you in your English language learning experience?

C1: They play games with us.

I: Only games?

C1: Sometimes.

I: Then what else?

C1: They teach us directly.

I: How's that? What kind of teaching materials?

C1: Textbooks.

I: Textbooks ..... how do they teach you using the textbooks?

C1: Sentence by sentence.

I: How about the vocabulary?

C1: They teach us vocabulary while introducing sentence patterns.

I: What procedures do they adopt in teaching vocabulary? Do they ask you to read the words first?

C1: They read once and then ask us to repeat after them. Afterwards, they explain the meanings.

I: I see ..... concerning the meanings, are they in English or Chinese?

C1: Both Chinese and English.

I: Do they require you to repeat the words several times until you know how to pronounce them?

C1: Sometimes.

I: Then what's your opinion towards this teaching method?

C1: Quite good.

I: You think it's quite good. Why?

C1: It's easy to remember.

I: Easy to remember? Which aspects?

C1: It's interesting when games are used to teach words.

I: How about when comprehension passages are used?

C1: It's quite boring then.

I: Ok. The second question is, how do you feel about the traditional grammar-translation approach to EFL vocabulary teaching? Let me explain what does it mean by the traditional grammar-translation approach first. For example, the use of bilingual wordlists, the adoption of Chinese to explain word meanings and also a heavy emphasis on pronunciation. What's your opinion towards this approach?

C1: It's difficult to remember the words and what is taught is easily forgotten.



I: Why?

C1: Since when you feel bored, you will easily forget what is taught.

I: That means you think it's boring.

C1: Yes.

I: Then, can you learn a lot of words through this teaching methodology?

C1: I don't think so.

I: Can it help you to develop autonomous word learning skills? That means you have the initiative to learn words outside class.

C1: No.

I: Are you able to use the words you have learned efficiently and appropriately in context?

C1: Sometimes only.

I: How do you feel about the vocabulary acquisition workshop?

C1: Sometimes it's good but it's boring sometimes.

I: Can you explain more?

C1: It's interesting when you played games with us.

I: I see. When I played games with you, you found it interesting. But when I teach you words in the comprehension passages, you felt very bored, right?

C1: Yes.

I: What do you think are the characteristics of an effective approach for EFL vocabulary teaching?

C1: There should be some games, or competitions.

I: That means there should be more activities, more interactive. Anything else?

C1: Both Chinese and English should be used to explain words.

I: You think both English and Chinese should be used ..... what give you the most difficulty in vocabulary learning?

C1: ..... I don't know .....

I: You don't have any difficulties?

C1: Er .....

I: For example, have you ever forgotten the spelling of certain words?

C1: Sometimes ..... sometimes I mix up words which are similar.

I: Have you ever forgotten the spelling of words?

C1: Sometimes.

I: How about the usage of words?

C1: Seldom.

I: I see. That's the end of the interview, thanks a lot for your help.



Date: 17<sup>th</sup> December, 2001

Time: 1:15 pm

Interviewer: Yeung Siu Fung, Betty (I)

Interviewee: Chan Sam Yi (C2)

I: I have some questions concerning the teaching and learning of English vocabulary that I would like to ask you. Please feel free to express your opinions. The first question is, how is vocabulary taught to you in your English language learning experience?

C2: Games.

I: Anything else?

C2: Pictures and textbooks.

I: How do they teach you words in textbooks?

C2: They ask us to underline the important words ..... and ask us to read them.

I: Are the words always from the comprehension passages in the textbooks?

C2: Yes.

I: And teachers ask you to underline the words that they think are difficult for you and then ask you to read those words.

C2: Yes ..... and also explain their meanings.

I: How to explain the meanings? They ask you to explain the meanings?

C2: Look up the words in dictionaries.

I: They ask for the meanings of words during class.

C2: Yes ..... and we tell teachers the meanings of words and see if they are correct.

I: Then ..... if it comes to the times teachers explain the meanings of words? How do they do that? Using English or Chinese?

C2: Both.

I: Both. Do they require you to repeat the words several times until you know how to pronounce them?

C2: Yes.

I: What is your opinion towards this teaching method?

C2: I think it's good.

I: How?

C2: It's good if we can learn by ourselves.

I: You think self-learning is important then ..... but not every teacher will ask you to look up the words in the dictionaries, some may just provide the meanings to you during class. Then do you think it's not that good?

C2: Yes.

I: Why?

C2: It's because we will easily forget what is taught. If we look up the meanings of the words ourselves, we'll have a deeper impression.

I: I see. The second question is, how do you feel about the traditional grammar-translation approach to EFL vocabulary teaching? Let me explain what does it mean by the traditional grammar-translation approach first. For example, the use of bilingual wordlists, the adoption of Chinese to explain word meanings and also a heavy emphasis on pronunciation. What's your opinion towards this

approach?

C2: I think it's quite good.

I: You think it's good? How?

C2: We may easily remember the pronunciation and meanings.

I: But the meanings of the words are not being looked up by yourselves.

C2: But when the teachers say that the words are important, I will try to remember them.

I: Then how do you find this method? Interesting or boring?

C2: Quite boring.

I: Why?

C2: Er ..... it's very monotonous, just sitting there and listen.

I: I see. Then do you think you can learn a lot of words through this method?

C2: Yes.

I: Can it help you to develop autonomous word learning skills when the meanings of words are provided by teachers?

C2: Maybe.

I: Maybe ..... that means sometimes you may but sometimes you may be lazy in doing so since you know that the meanings of words will be given by teachers, right?

C2: Yes.

I: Are you able to use the words you have learned efficiently and appropriately in context?

C2: Yes ..... but sometimes I would forget .....

I: Forgot what?

C2: How to spell the words.

I: How do you feel about the vocabulary acquisition workshop?

C2: I think it's quite good.

I: Mmm .....

C2: There was Chinese-English translation.

I: In your opinion, what are the characteristics of an effective approach for EFL vocabulary teaching?

C2: It should be more interactive.

I: Yes. Anything else?

C2: No.

I: What gives you the most difficulty in vocabulary learning?

C2: When I cannot seek help ..... when I haven't brought a dictionary with me or there is no teacher to help me.

I: I see ..... that means you are quite dependent on dictionaries and teachers, right?

C2: Yes.

I: Anything else?

C2: No.

I: That's the end of the interview. Thanks a lot for your help.



Date: 17<sup>th</sup> December, 2001

Time: 1:15 pm

Interviewer: Yeung Siu Fung, Betty (I)

Interviewee: Lau See Wah (C3)

I: I have some questions concerning the teaching and learning of English vocabulary which I would like to ask for your opinions. Please feel free to express your views. The first question is, what is vocabulary taught to you in your English language learning experience?

C3: They teach us the words in textbooks.

I: How?

C3: They pick up the words which we haven't learned before in the textbooks, then write them on the blackboard and explain to us.

I: How do they explain to you?

C3: They tell us the usage of the words, the pronunciation.

I: Do they explain the meanings in English, Chinese or both?

C3: Mostly English, but when we really don't understand, they use Chinese.

I: Do they ask you to repeat the words until you know how to pronounce them?

C3: Er ..... first of all, they read once, and then when they write the words on the blackboards, they repeat the word once. They pronounce the words one more time when explaining the words. Lastly, they ask us to read all the words written on the blackboard. While we are pronouncing the words, if they find that we don't know how to pronounce them, they teach us again.

I: That means you have to read the words several times.

C3: Yes.

I: Then what is your opinion towards this teaching method?

C3: It's good.

I: Why?

C3: It can't be explained.

I: Can you try to explain?

C3: We can understand the usage of words and learn the pronunciation. More words can be learned.

I: Do you find this method boring or interesting?

C3: Sometimes interesting but sometimes boring.

I: Why?

C3: How to explain .....

I: Why do you find it boring?

C3: I just think it is boring, but I am not able to explain why.

I: Ok. The next question is, how do you feel about the traditional grammar-translation approach to EFL vocabulary teaching? Let me explain what does it mean by the traditional grammar-translation approach first. For example, the use of bilingual wordlists, the adoption of Chinese to explain word meanings and also a heavy emphasis on pronunciation. What's your opinion towards this approach?

C3: I think it is sometimes boring but good sometimes.



- I: How good is it?
- C3: It can increase our understanding of the meanings of words and their pronunciation.
- I: Do you think you can learn a lot of words through this method?
- C3: Maybe.
- I: Why?
- C3: I do not have much confidence in this method.
- I: Lack of confidence. How?
- C3: Can you repeat the question?
- I: Yes. Do you think you can learn a lot of words through the traditional method?
- C3: A lot? Mmm ..... maybe.
- I: Ok. Then can this method help you to develop autonomous word learning skills?
- C3: What's the definition of autonomous word learning?
- I: That means you have the initiative to learn words on your own even after class.
- C3: Sometimes.
- I: That means sometimes you will but sometimes not. Then, are you able to use the words you have learned efficiently and appropriately in context?
- C3: For some words.
- I: Can you explain more?
- C3: I always forget the words, how they spelt and their usages.
- I: But you told me that this method is good since it can increase your understanding of words.
- C3: But I can still forget the words anyway.
- I: What is the reason you forget the words? Are they too much?
- C3: You can say so. For instance, we have to learn three chapters every week but there are so many vocabulary in that three chapters that we have to learn, we simply can't remember all of them.
- I: Ok. How do you feel about the vocabulary acquisition workshop?
- C3: Mmm ..... I don't know how to explain.
- I: Try. Ok. Let me try to put the question in another way. How do you feel about the teaching methods that were used in the vocabulary acquisition workshop?
- C3: Er ..... not too bad or good.
- I: Why?
- C3: Er ..... in fact, I already learned some of the words that were taught in the workshop. That's why I can only learn a little.
- I: Anything good then?
- C3: Er ... I don't know.
- I: Ok. In your opinion, what are the characteristics of an effective approach for EFL vocabulary teaching?
- C3: I think the way that I was taught in the primary school is already not bad.
- I: That means you think the traditional approach is efficient?
- C3: Yes.
- I: What gives you the most difficulty in vocabulary learning?
- C3: Can you give some examples of what's meant by "difficulty"

- I: For instance, you forget how to spell the words or the usages of words.  
Something like that.
- C3: It's always the case that I forget the spelling of words.
- I: Anything else? How about the meanings of words, do you always forget them?
- C3: No.
- I: You always remember the meanings of words?
- C3: Yes.
- I: Ok. That's the end of the interview, thanks a lot for your help.



Date: 17<sup>th</sup> December, 2001

Time: 1:30 pm

Interviewer: Yeung Siu Fung, Betty (I)

Interviewee: Cheung Ka Fung (C4)

I: I have some questions concerning the teaching and learning of English vocabulary that I would like to ask you, please feel free to express your opinions. The first question is, how is vocabulary taught to you in your English language learning experience?

C4: They teach us synonyms, the usages and pronunciation.

I: How about the teaching materials?

C4: ..... usually stories are used.

I: Stories. Are they from the textbooks?

C4: Yes and sometimes from other books.

I: How do they teach words then?

C4: If there are new or difficult words, they will teach us.

I: They teach you those words that they think you don't understand, right?

C4: Yes.

I: Can you describe the process?

C4: They teach us the pronunciation and meanings first. Then, the usages and synonyms.

I: Concerning pronunciation, do they require you to pronounce the words until you know the pronunciation?

C4: Yes.

I: Do they need you to repeat the words several times?

C4: Yes.

I: How about the explanations of words? Do they use English, Chinese or both?

C4: Both.

I: What is our opinion towards that?

C4: We can understand the words easily.

I: This is the strength, are there any weaknesses? Do you find it boring or interesting?

C4: Quite interesting.

I: How do you feel about the traditional grammar-translation approach to EFL vocabulary teaching? Let me explain what does it mean by the traditional grammar-translation approach first. For example, the use of bilingual wordlists, the adoption of Chinese to explain word meanings and also a heavy emphasis on pronunciation. What's your opinion towards this approach?

C4: If all the things are readily provided by teachers, we will easily forget the words. It's better for us to learn the meanings ourselves.

I: I see, you can't have a deep impression of words. Then, can you learn a lot of words through this method?

C4: Not so much, I think. Just a few.

I: Why?

C4: Since I may forget some of the words.



- I: Can you learn different types of words?  
C4: Maybe.  
I: Can this method help you to develop autonomous word learning skills?  
C4: Yes.  
I: Are you able to use the words you have learned efficiently and appropriately in context? Have you ever forgotten the spellings of words or encountered any difficulties?  
C4: Yes.  
I: That means you have come across with some difficulties?  
C4: Yes.  
I: How do you feel about the vocabulary acquisition workshop?  
C4: .....  
I: What's your opinion towards the teaching methods used in the workshop?  
C4: We have time to think, and then our mistakes were corrected.  
I: In your opinion, what are the characteristics of an effective approach for EFL vocabulary teaching?  
C4: It should be more interesting and there should be chances for students to think.  
I: That means there should be more self-learning and not all the things are readily provided by teachers?  
C4: Yes.  
I: What gives you the most difficulty in vocabulary teaching?  
C4: Wrong pronunciation.  
I: Wrong pronunciation. Anything else?  
C4: Wrong spellings.  
I: Yes.  
C4: Sometimes, I am confused with the usages of words.  
I: That means sometimes you use the words inappropriately, right?  
C4: Yes.  
I: That's the end of the interview, thanks a lot for your help.

Date: 17<sup>th</sup> December, 2001

Time: 1:45 pm

Interviewer: Yeung Siu Fung, Betty (I)

Interviewee: Hung Ka Hei (C5)

I: I have some questions concerning the teaching and learning of English vocabulary that I would like to ask you, please feel free to express your opinions. The first question is, how is vocabulary taught to you in your English language learning experience?

C5: They just read aloud the words.

I: How about the teaching materials?

C5: Using texts.

I: From the textbooks?

C5: Yes.

I: How do they teach words then?

C5: When they talk about the words, they ask us for their meanings. Ask us to look up the meanings from the dictionaries beforehand.

I: Then how do they explain the meanings of words during class?

C5: When we are explaining the meanings of words, if the explanation is wrong, they tell us the meanings.

I: Do they use English, Chinese or both?

C5: Mainly Chinese.

I: How about the pronunciation? Do they require you to repeat the words several times until you know how to pronounce them?

C5: Sometimes.

I: When?

C5: When the words are difficult to pronounce.

I: What is your opinion towards this teaching method?

C5: .....

I: Is there any strength or weakness?

C5: If we forget to look up the meanings of words, it'll be a big problem. It's very embarrassing if I am not able to tell teachers the meanings of words.

I: Sometimes, teachers may not ask you to look up the words but give you the meanings, how do you feel about this?

C5: It's easy to forget the words.

I: You don't have a deep impression. Do you find this method boring or interesting?

C5: It's boring.

I: Why?

C5: Most students are not very concentrated during class. Just teachers teaching all the time, there is seldom interaction between teachers and students.

I: Ok. The second question is, how do you feel about the traditional grammar-translation approach to EFL vocabulary teaching? Let me explain what does it mean by the traditional grammar-translation approach first. For example, the use of bilingual wordlists, the adoption of Chinese to explain word meanings and



- also a heavy emphasis on pronunciation. What's your opinion towards this approach?
- C5: It's not good.
- I: Why?
- C5: It's just rote memorization, we'll not remember the words.
- I: Can you learn a lot of words then?
- C5: Just a bit. It doesn't give us a deep impression of the words.
- I: Then, can this method help you to develop autonomous word learning skills?
- C5: No.
- I: Are you able to use the words you've learned efficiently and appropriately in context?
- C5: No.
- I: How do you feel about the vocabulary acquisition workshop?
- C5: It didn't cover a lot of varieties of words.
- I: Yes, since there's time limitations. Therefore, I could only pick some vocabulary to teach you ..... how about the teaching methods used in the workshop?
- C5: I think it's quite good.
- I: In your opinion, what are the characteristics of an effective approach for EFL vocabulary teaching?
- C5: Teachers should ask us to look up the meanings of words ourselves instead of providing us with the meanings, so we can have a deeper impression.
- I: That means self-learning is important.
- C5: Yes.
- I: What gives you the most difficulty in vocabulary learning.
- C5: I always forget the spellings.
- I: Maybe you have some impression of the words but always unable to spell them correctly, right?
- C5: Yes.
- I: Anything else?
- C5: Pronunciation.
- I: You don't know how to pronounce the words sometimes.
- C5: Yes.
- I: That's the end of the interview, thanks a lot for your help.



Date: 17<sup>th</sup> December, 2001

Time: 2:00 pm

Interviewer: Yeung Siu Fung, Betty (I)

Interviewee: Lee Yee Fong (C6)

I: I have some questions concerning the teaching and learning of English vocabulary that I would like to ask you, please feel free to express your opinions. The first question is, how is vocabulary taught to you in your English language learning experience?

C6: Using pictures.

I: Anything other than pictures?

C6: Using another English word to explain an English vocabulary.

I: How about the teaching materials? Do they use comprehension passages from textbooks?

C6: Yes.

I: How do they teach vocabulary?

C6: Er ..... I don't know how to describe.

I: Is that they ask you to underline some of the words that they think you don't know?

C6: Yes.

I: Then?

C6: Copy those words down onto the vocabulary notebooks.

I: After that?

C6: For some really difficult words, we'll be asked to dictate the words the next day.

I: Do they require you to repeat the words several times?

C6: Yes.

I: How about the meanings of words? Do they tell you the meanings?

C6: Sometimes, they ask if we know what the words mean, if we don't, they tell us the meanings.

I: Are the explanations in Chinese and English?

C6: Mostly in English but if we really can't get the meanings, Chinese is used.

I: What's your opinion towards this teaching method?

C6: Quite good.

I: How good is that?

C6: They give us time to think about the meanings of words.

I: Are there any weaknesses?

C6: I think no.

I: Ok. The second question is, how do you feel about the traditional grammar-translation approach to EFL vocabulary teaching? Let me explain what does it mean by the traditional grammar-translation approach first. For example, the use of bilingual wordlists, the adoption of Chinese to explain word meanings and also a heavy emphasis on pronunciation. What's your opinion towards this approach?

C6: It's not very good.

I: Why?

C6: The explanation is not clear.  
 I: Then how will it be clearer?  
 C6: Teachers should use the words to make some sentences.  
 I: Can you learn a lot of words from this method?  
 C6: No.  
 I: Then can it help you to develop autonomous word learning skills?  
 C6: No.  
 I: Are you able to use the words you have learned efficiently and appropriately in context?  
 C6: Sometimes.  
 I: How?  
 C6: We may have some impression of the words.  
 I: Have you ever forgotten the meanings?  
 C6: Yes.  
 I: How do you feel about the vocabulary acquisition workshop?  
 C6: It's too much.  
 I: Can you explain that?  
 C6: Too many words were taught each time.  
 I: In your opinion, what are the characteristics of an effective approach for EFL vocabulary teaching?  
 C6: Teachers should teach us in small increment.  
 I: Then how will your interest be aroused?  
 C6: I am already interested.  
 I: Really?  
 C6: Yes.  
 I: The last question is, what gives you the most difficult in vocabulary learning?  
 C6: Pronunciation.  
 I: You always forget the pronunciation?  
 C6: Yes.  
 I: Anything else? Have you ever forgotten the meanings or usages?  
 C6: No.  
 I: That's the end of the interview, thanks a lot for your help.



Date: 18<sup>th</sup> December, 2001

Time: 1:15 pm

Interviewer: Yeung Siu Fung, Betty (I)

Interviewee: Tam Ho Pong (C7)

I: I have some questions concerning the teaching and learning of English vocabulary that I would like to ask you, please feel free to express your opinions. The first question is, how is vocabulary taught to you in your English language learning experience?

C7: They list all the words on the blackboards and teach us.

I: Where do the words come from?

C7: From the comprehension passages in textbooks.

I: They pick up the words that they think you don't know, right?

C7: And teach us the pronunciation.

I: Pronunciation ..... then?

C7: Use the words to make some sentences.

I: How about the meanings of words?

C7: They tell us the meanings also.

I: In English or Chinese?

C7: Chinese mostly but sometimes English maybe used.

I: Do they require you to repeat the words several times until you know how to pronounce them?

C7: Yes.

I: What's your opinion towards this teaching method?

C7: Quite good but it's boring.

I: Good but quite monotonous, since the meanings are readily provided by teachers.

C7: Yes.

I: The second question is, how do you feel about the traditional grammar-translation approach to EFL vocabulary teaching? Let me explain what does it mean by the traditional grammar-translation approach first. For example, the use of bilingual wordlists, the adoption of Chinese to explain word meanings and also a heavy emphasis on pronunciation. What's your opinion towards this approach? Can you learn a lot of words?

C7: Maybe.

I: Is it boring?

C7: Yes.

I: Why?

C7: It's only read and listen.

I: Then can it help you to develop autonomous word learning skills?

C7: Maybe.

I: All the things are readily provided by teachers, you still will learn on your own?

C7: Yes, since sometimes teachers may not be able to explain the words fully, we also have to look up the words in dictionaries sometimes.



- I: Are you able to use the words you have learned efficiently and appropriately in context?
- C7: Yes.
- I: Have you ever forgotten the meanings of words?
- C7: Yes.
- I: How do you feel about the vocabulary acquisition workshop?
- C7: Quite good.
- I: How good?
- C7: Since it's a combination of the traditional approach and some interactive methods.
- I: In your opinion, what are the characteristics of an effective approach for EFL vocabulary teaching?
- C7: It should be interactive and with some ingredients of the traditional method.
- I: What gives you the most difficulty in vocabulary learning?
- C7: I always forget the meanings and usages.
- I: You don't know how the words are used in different contexts?
- C7: Yes.
- I: That's the end of the interview, thanks a lot for your help.

Date: 18<sup>th</sup> December, 2001

Time: 1:35 pm

Interviewer: Yeung Siu Fung, Betty (I)

Interviewee: Tai Kin Wa (C8)

I: I have some questions concerning the teaching and learning of English vocabulary that I would like to ask you, please feel free to express your opinions. The first question is, how is vocabulary taught to you in your English language learning experience?

C8: They just teach us directly.

I: How?

C8: They teach the words directly from textbooks.

I: How about the teaching materials?

C8: Textbooks.

I: Comprehension passages in textbooks?

C8: Yes.

I: How do they teach the words then?

C8: Er ..... they ask if we know what the words mean. If we don't know, they explain to us.

I: Are the explanations in Chinese or English?

C8: Chinese.

I: Always Chinese.

C8: Yes.

I: Do they use English?

C8: Seldom.

I: Seldom. I see. Do they require you to repeat the words several times until you know how to pronounce them?

C8: Yes.

I: What are your opinions towards this teaching method?

C8: No comment.

I: Try to give some opinions, is it good or bad?

C8: It's boring.

I: Anything apart from that? Can you learn a lot of words?

C8: Maybe.

I: The second question is, how do you feel about the traditional grammar-translation approach to EFL vocabulary teaching? Let me explain what does it mean by the traditional grammar-translation approach first. For example, the use of bilingual wordlists, the adoption of Chinese to explain word meanings and also a heavy emphasis on pronunciation. What's your opinion towards this approach? Can you learn a lot of words?

C8: Er ..... more elaboration is needed during class.

I: Then, can you learn a lot of words through this method?

C8: Er ..... no. Since the words are easily forgotten.

I: Can you learn different types of words?

C8: No.

I: Can the traditional method help you to develop autonomous word learning skills?

C8: No.

I: Since all the things are readily provided by teachers, right?

C8: Yes

I: Are you able to use the words you have learned efficiently and appropriately in context?

C8: No.

I: Why?

C8: Since I can't remember the words.

I: How do you feel about the vocabulary acquisition workshop?

C8: It's too early in the morning.

I: Anything concerning the teaching methods?

C8: It's quite boring

I: Boring, do you think it's just similar to the way you are taught in class?

C8: Yes, very similar.

I: Ok. In your opinion, what are the characteristics of an effective approach for EFL vocabulary teaching?

C8: More Chinese should be used.

I: Anything else?

C8: No.

I: Why do you want to have more Chinese?

C8: We can't understand if English is used

I: The last question is, what gives you the most difficulty in vocabulary learning?

C8: Er ..... even though I've learned the words, they are always being forgotten.

I: Which aspect of words do you always forget?

C8: Meanings, pronunciation.

I: Then, what can make you remember those?

C8: Pronounce more.

I: But you said that it's boring to repeat the words so many times. It's quite contradictory.

C8: Yes.

I: Maybe learning a language is not an easy task, right?

C8: Yes.

I: But in conclusion, you've encountered problems with the spellings, pronunciation and meanings of words.

C8: Yes.

I: For instance, you know the word "pineapple" but you maybe not be very sure of its spelling, right?

C8: Yes.

I: That's the end of the interview, thanks a lot for your help.



Date: 18<sup>th</sup> December, 2001

Time: 3:25 pm

Interviewer: Yeung Siu Fung, Betty (I)

Interviewee: Wu Ka Kin (C9)

I: I have some questions concerning the teaching and learning of English vocabulary that I would like to ask you, please feel free to express your opinions. The first question is, how is vocabulary taught to you in your English language learning experience?

C9: They use some words which we already know to explain the new vocabulary.

I: How about the teaching materials?

C9: ..... they bring the real objects to class or using pictures.

I: Do they make use of the comprehension passages from textbooks?

C9: Yes.

I: How do they teach words from the passages?

C9: They pick up the difficult words and ask if anyone knows the meanings of those words, if not, they teach us the words.

I: How do they explain words? Using Chinese or English?

C9: English .....using some other English words to explain.

I: How about if the students really don't understand?

C9: Then they use Chinese.

I: What is your opinion towards this teaching method?

C9: We can learn some words.

I: Are there any strengths and weaknesses?

C9: The strength is that we can learn some words.

I: How about the weaknesses?

C9: Sometimes we may not really understand the meanings of words.

I: The second question is, how do you feel about the traditional grammar-translation approach to EFL vocabulary teaching? Let me explain what does it mean by the traditional grammar-translation approach first. For example, the use of bilingual wordlists, the adoption of Chinese to explain word meanings and also a heavy emphasis on pronunciation. What's your opinion towards this approach? Can you learn a lot of words?

C9: Students may not really understand. It's just rote learning.

I: Mmm ..... then do you think it can help you to develop autonomous word learning skills?

C9: No.

I: Why?

C9: There is no need to do so since all the things, the meanings of the words are readily provided by teachers.

I: It's not good then?

C9: Yes.

I: Why?

C9: We can't learn a lot of words.

I: Then are you able to use the words you have learned efficiently and

appropriately in context?

C9: No.

I: How do you feel about the vocabulary acquisition workshop?

C9: We can learn a lot of words

I: How about the teaching methods?

C9: You selected some passages and taught us the difficult words.

I: Do you think it's good?

C9: Quite good.

I: In your opinion, what are the characteristics of an effective approach for EFL vocabulary teaching?

C9: Using some other words we already knew to teach us new vocabulary. Using synonyms.

I: Using synonyms. Anything else?

C9: So we can learn more.

I: Any more suggestions?

C9: There should be more activities which can let us learn words.

I: More activities. Ok. The last question is, what gives you the most difficult in vocabulary learning?

C9: .....

I: What's the most difficult?

C9: Those words which have multiple meanings.

I: You don't know how to handle those words?

C9: Yes.

I: Anything else?

C9: Sometimes .....

I: Have you ever forgotten the spellings or pronunciation of words?

C9: Yes.

I: In conclusion, the difficulties you've encountered in learning vocabulary are that you don't know how to use the words with multiple meanings, also, you always forget the spellings and pronunciations of words, right?

C9: Yes.

I: That's the end of the interview, thanks a lot for your help.



Date: 18<sup>th</sup> December, 2001

Time: 3:40 pm

Interviewer: Yeung Siu Fung, Betty (I)

Interviewee: Chan Suk Ping (C10)

I: I have some questions concerning the teaching and learning of English vocabulary that I would like to ask you, please feel free to express your opinions. The first question is, how is vocabulary taught to you in your English language learning experience?

C10: They teach us one by one, write the words on the blackboards and explaining them one after another. Then they teach us the pronunciation, ask us to read the words and tell us the definitions.

I: How about the teaching materials? Do they use comprehension passages, pictures or real objects?

C10: Passages and pictures.

I: Passage and pictures. Which one is more frequently used?

C10: Mostly comprehension passages.

I: Where are the passages from? Textbooks?

C10: Yes.

I: Then how do they teach words?

C10: First, teachers read the words to us. Then, explain the words and tell us the pronunciation.

I: Concerning the explanations, are they in Chinese or English?

C10: Er ..... mostly in English, but if we really don't understand, Chinese is used.

I: Do they require you to repeat the words several times until you know how to pronounce them?

C10: Er ..... they write the words on the blackboards, teach us the words and explain to us. Then, they read the words once, ask us to repeat after them and we have to pronounce them on our own finally.

I: That means you have to repeat several times.

C10: Yes.

I: Are the words selected by teachers or students?

C10: Teachers.

I: What are your opinions towards this teaching method?

C10: We can learn the words selected by teachers. Using English to explain the words, we can learn even more English. Moreover, we don't have to worry that we don't understand the words since Chinese is used if we really have problem in understanding.

I: Mmm ..... Are there any weaknesses?

C10: Weaknesses .....it's impossible for teachers to teach you all the words and let you understand thoroughly, that means we have to depend on ourselves sometimes. There are forty students in a class, when the teachers use English to explain the words, not all students can understand, therefore we have to search for the meanings ourselves.

I: Then do you find this method boring?



C10: No.

I: The second question is, how do you feel about the traditional grammar-translation approach to EFL vocabulary teaching? Let me explain what does it mean by the traditional grammar-translation approach first. For example, the use of bilingual wordlists, the adoption of Chinese to explain word meanings and also a heavy emphasis on pronunciation. What's your opinion towards this approach? Can you learn a lot of words?

C10: When it comes to the usages of words, we may not be able to use them appropriately.

I: Since you learn the words in isolation?

C10: Yes.

I: Do you find that boring?

C10: No.

I: Why?

C10: Since at least we know how to pronounce the words.

I: Mmm ..... can you learn a lot of words through the traditional method?

C10: Yes.

I: Do you think you can learn different types of words then?

C10: Er ..... when compared with learning words in terms of sentences, we learn less from this method.

I: Ok. Can it help you to develop autonomous word learning skills?

C10: Yes.

I: Are you able to use the words you have learned efficiently and appropriately in context?

C10: No.

I: How do you feel about the vocabulary acquisition workshop?

C10: We can learn some words that are seldom taught during class.

I: Yes. For instance, names of vegetables.

C10: Yes.

I: How about the teaching method?

C10: Sometimes, I found it boring but I took notes sometimes, then it would be less boring.

I: Why was it boring?

C10: Since only vocabulary was taught but nothing else.

I: I see. The next question is, what do you think are the characteristics of an effective approach for EFL vocabulary teaching?

C10: Teachers should tell us the meanings of words, teach us the pronunciation and then use the words to make some sentences. Finally, teachers should ask students to make sentences using the words.

I: Anything else?

C10: That's all.

I: What gives you the most difficulty in vocabulary learning?

C10: The greatest difficulty is spellings since there are too many words.

I: You find difficulty in spelling?



## Appendix P. Transcription of interviews (teachers)

Date: 11<sup>th</sup> October, 2001

Time: 11:30 pm

Interviewer: Yeung Siu Fung, Betty (I)

Interviewees: Miss Tang Yin Chun (T1), Miss Chan Siu Ling (T2)

I: I'll first give you the questions that will be asked during the interviews for you to have a look. In fact, I'll be teaching vocabulary in the workshop. The first question that I'd like to ask is about your current methodology of teaching vocabulary to EFL students in Hong Kong.

T1: I'll usually use passage to introduce new words and pick up the related vocabulary and teach the students, it's always the case.

I: Hmmm ..... see. Concerning the passages, are they from the textbooks that the students use?

T1: Yes.

T2: Last year, I taught class 1A also. When I was discussing things with them, when I came up with some vocabulary that I liked them to know, I would write them down on the blackboard. I required them to bring with them a notebook so that they could write the new vocabulary down and learn them. Since they were weak in English, so I didn't mind if they wrote down the meaning of the words in Chinese. I'd write the whole words down on the blackboard. However, I didn't have time to go over the words with them again to see if they could really learn the words. If the schedule is not tight, I would ask the students what words they had learned and remembered during the weeks, words either from the passages on the textbooks or being introduced by the teachers. Then the students would refer to their notebooks and see which words they had learned, or they would look at their course books. Afterwards, I'd ask them to copy the words once again as homework. However, I cannot guarantee if they can really learn the words even though they work very hard to copy the words down, but I think that they should have some impression of the words because they have already come across with the words before. When I talked about those words that I have taught them before, I'd say, "I have mentioned this word before". Some of the students may remember that they have learned the word before and can find out the words in their notebooks. However, most of them can only grasp a blurred impression of the words. In fact, they don't know how to pronounce or spell the words.

I: Then, will you provide the students with the Chinese translation of the words?

T1: Yes, I will.

T2: For some of the words. For the easy ones, there is no need to give the translation to them.

T1: But sometimes they don't even know the meaning of the easy ones. I really need to see if they understand the words. If they don't know, I must write the meaning down.

T2: When introducing new words, if the situation is special, the students will be



more likely to remember the words. For example, if you use the words to praise, to criticize someone or if they are related to the drama series on TV, the students will have a deeper impression.

I: Those words that are more related to their daily lives?

T2: Yes, they will have a deeper impression.

I: How would you teach a new word? For example, will you give them the meaning first and then the pronunciation or some other ways?

T1: Read with them once first.

I: Read with them once first and then .....

T1: Give them a situation and use the situation to teach the vocabulary. Then, I'll give them the meaning in Chinese.

I: Will you ask them to pronounce the words until they can master the pronunciation? Will you put a lot of emphasis on pronunciation?

T1: Pronunciation.

T1&2: Yes.

I: Do you find any difficulties in teaching vocabulary?

T1: They don't know how to use the words in context. It is usually the case that they know the meaning of the words but when it comes to a situation, they don't know how to use the words in context. In addition, they are quite weak in part of speech. They don't know what is the role a word should play in a sentence. For example, they know the meaning a word but don't know that there is a pattern and the word must be placed in a certain position in a sentence. I think it's the weakness of the secondary one students.

T2: I think they are too passive. Although they are interested in learning words, after they have learned the words in class, they will not try to explore more into the words. They will not try to see if the words have any alternative meaning. In fact, what I expect them to do is to look up the dictionary so that they can know the part of speech of the words and how the words can be used. They won't bother to do this.

T1: They only learn words superficially and they won't like to go deeper. They're very passive ..... Also, they are scared of vocabulary. For example, they are not scared when you teach them oral, listening and grammar skills. However, they are scared once they have to learn new words.

I: Why? Is that they always need to spell the words?

T1: They are scared of remembering the spelling. This is the first thing. Also, they may think that learning vocabulary implies a lot of things they have to recite and remember. Therefore, they are afraid of learning vocabulary.

T2: For students in a CMI school, their difficulties can be understood since they do not have a lot of time to come into contact with English. The number of vocabulary that can be introduced only during the few English lessons is very limited. The number is so few.

T1: It is because they can only come across with English vocabulary in English lessons. Since students do have to learn English vocabulary in other lessons, but suddenly they have to learn a lot of words in your (English) lessons, therefore they may not welcome this.



- T2: For a lot of the time, when using words, students usually think of the words in Chinese first and then try to find out the English translation. For example, the word “touching”? What is the word in English? They tend to think in Chinese first.
- T1: Since they don’t have other method or subject which can give them chances to use English. It seems that they are learning English as a subject but not learning how to put English in real application.
- I: For some teachers, when they teach vocabulary, they will give the words to students, ask them to pronounce the words and then give them the Chinese translation. What is your opinion towards this teaching approach?
- T2: If the students have the initiative to learn, once they know how to pronounce the words or they will look up the phonetic symbols from the dictionary and know how to read the symbols, they may learn the words through this method.
- T1: They may learn some words ..... but for those weaker students, this method.....
- T2: Does not work ..... this method does not work on our students.
- T1: You should give them more room to imagine the meaning of the new words ..... for example, pictures, examples, role play or perform the action and ask the students to follow what you do. When you teach vocabulary of expression, facial expression, you may even need to teach them using facial expression yourself!
- T2: They will have a deeper impression.
- T1: Yes. Sometimes, when dealing with weaker students, I think we need to use more varieties. But these don’t really help.
- T2: Time is limited.
- T1: It is easy to say than to do it. Even though we’ve done a lot of things to teach them, the reward is not that satisfactory. It is because some of them are really very weak.
- T2: They are lazy also.
- I: Yes.
- T2: They cannot see the need. Since they only need to use the language for English but not other subjects.
- T1: Just like what we’d talked about yesterday. Some of the students are new immigrants. They have not learned English before. Some of the students who come from the mainland only learn English when they are in primary five. After they have learned English for half a year, they come to Hong Kong. They don’t have the competence to learn secondary one level’s English.
- T2: Some even don’t know how to spell the word “bus”!
- I: Really?
- T1: Yes. They even mix up “boy” and “dog”!
- I: In your opinion, how can the students develop a rich corpus of vocabulary? What they need to do?
- T2: Read books ..... newspapers.
- I: Read books.
- T1: I agree.



- T2: But our students won't do that.
- I: Do you find the Extensive Reading Scheme (ERS) useful for your students?
- T1: It will be useful if it is implemented successfully. You can really push them to read. The first step is that you can make them and encourage them to read. To make them think that reading books can help them and reading is interesting. Afterwards, they can develop the initiative to read, then the effectiveness will be the greatest. Since I had a student, he read a lot when he was in form one. I find that when he was in form five, I am not sure if he got many good teachers teaching him these few years, his performance was very good. I think that this is related to the fact that he liked to read a lot since he was in form one and this helped him to build up a good foundation. I always think that reading more helps to improve one's English. One cannot only depend on the teachers. What is the most important is to push them to develop the interest in reading.
- I: However, when I was teaching from two the previous year, I found that some of the students just tried to copy the answers from the books once they got the question cards without really reading the books thoroughly.
- T1: Yes ..... they just want to be the one who reads the fastest ..... the nature of the ERS has changed already.
- T2: The books cannot capture students' interest.
- T1: The most determining factor is to help them develop the initiative in reading, from being pushed by teachers to being self-initiative. There is no point if we need to push them to read. In addition, since the books are not interesting, so they just copy the answers directly from the books.
- I: In fact, there will be two groups in my workshop. For Siu Ling's class (1A), I will be using the Vocabulary Self-collection Strategy (VSS) and Tg's class (1B) will be the control group in which the traditional approach e.g. comprehension passages will be used. After the treatment, I will compare the test results of the two groups to see which group learn better. For Siu Ling's class, I hope that the workshop can raise their sensitivity towards the words around them in their surrounding environment. Even when we go to the supermarket, we can learn a lot of words if we are aware of them. We can even learn a lot of words even if we go to the Mcdonald's. For 1A, a few trips will be arranged. Students will be asked to copy vocabulary during the trips and there will be follow-up lessons after each outing. Just as what you've mentioned before, reading does help students to acquire vocabulary, however, most students do not really like to read. In fact, if we can develop the awareness, we can learn a lot of words every minute in our environment. I hope that they can learn something through the workshop.
- T2: I think it can help them. I'd told my students that they can learn a lot of words even if they are on the MTR. However, they will not be aware of that.
- T1: They won't pay attention to the words around them.
- T2: The sensitivity of our students towards words is really very low.
- T1: They can't sense the need to learn more words.
- T2: I think that if extra time can't be given, just like your workshop, they can learn a lot.



Date: 7<sup>th</sup> January, 2002

Time: 9:30 am

Interviewer: Yeung Siu Fung, Betty (I)

Interviewee: Mr. Lee King Ming (T3)

I: Good morning, Mr. Lee. I have some questions concerning the teaching of vocabulary in Hong Kong EFL classrooms that I would like to ask you. Can I start now?

T3: Yes, sure.

I: The first question is, what is your methodology of vocabulary teaching?

T3: I usually adopt the vocabulary checklists in the English textbooks as the teaching materials. First, I teach them the pronunciation. Also, the Chinese equivalents of the words are provided in the lists. I tell them the meanings of the words. After that, I use some example sentences to teach them. To let them know how to use the words in context.

I: Mmm .....Then during vocabulary lessons, what do the teacher and students do? What you and the students usually do? And what kinds of teaching materials are adopted.

T3: I've mentioned before that I always use the vocabulary checklists in the textbooks. I ask them to pronounce the words together and ask some of the students to explain the meanings of the words.

I: How about when the students don't know the meanings of the words?

T3: I use some synonyms so that they can derive the meanings from the synonyms.

I: How about if they are not able to do so?

T3: I tell them the meanings then.

I: When explaining words, do you usually use Cantonese or English?

T3: For the difficult words, if they are not able to get the meanings, then I use Cantonese.

I: Mmm ..... For some of the textbooks, they may not have vocabulary checklists. Would you use the comprehension passages to teach them vocabulary?

T3: Er ..... yes.

I: The second question is, what are your opinions towards the ways you teach vocabulary?

T3: In Hong Kong, due to the tight teaching schedule, this method is very time-saving. However, if the method is always adopted to teach vocabulary, students easily get bored.

I: What difficulties do you experience in teaching vocabulary?

T3: Students think that the teaching method is not interesting. In addition, the words are not related to their daily life, they easily forget the words.

I: Then what do you think are the difficulties students face in learning vocabulary?

T3: Since most Hong Kong people don't use English in their daily communication, students can seldom practise using the words they've learned. When come to



tests and examinations, it seems to them that they have never learned anything. Even if they remember the words, they can't remember their meanings.

I: The next question is, in your opinion, what are the students' attitudes towards the ways they are taught?

T3: It seems to them that vocabulary learning is just a routine. For every chapter, they have to learn some new words.

I: Do you think they are interested in learning vocabulary?

T3: They have more interest to learn the words that are more commonly-used. If not, they are not interested in learning those words since they know that those words may not be so useful to them.

I: I see. How do you feel about the traditional grammar-translation approach to EFL vocabulary teaching? Let me explain what does it mean by the traditional grammar-translation approach first. For example, the use of bilingual wordlists, the adoption of Chinese to explain word meanings and also a heavy emphasis on pronunciation. What's your opinion towards this approach?

T3: In fact, this teaching methodology has been used for a long time. When I was a student, I was taught in this way. If it is often used to teach vocabulary, it can't arouse students' interest. However, just as what I've mentioned before, this method allows teachers to teach the pronunciation and meanings of the words quickly, so it may be suitable in Hong Kong as the teaching schedule is very tight. I think when we teach vocabulary, we should choose those words that are more related to students' daily life, those words that are more likely to appear in comprehension passages or those words that they can apply into their composition.

I: The next question is related to the teaching of vocabulary. Have you ever assigned dictation tasks to students?

T3: Yes, in order to let them remember the spelling of the words, I ask them to dictate the words every time after I've taught them words. However, I do not ask them to dictate isolated words but sentences so that they can remember their usage.

I: Mmm ..... In your opinion, how can students develop a rich corpus of vocabulary?

T3: I think students should develop the habit to record the words they have learned into a vocabulary notebooks. They can always refer to the notebooks to get a deeper impression of the words and their meanings. It can help their comprehension and composition skills.

I: How can they learn words outside class?

T3: For instance, when they go to the department store, they can learn a lot of words.

I: That means self-learning is important.

T3: Yes, self-learning is important.

I: How do you feel about the Extensive Reading Scheme for form one to three students? Do you find it useful for the students?

T3: I think the selection of books is very important. The books we are now using are provided by the Education Department. I learned from my friends that



Date: 7<sup>th</sup> January, 2002

Time: 10:30 am

Interviewer: Yeung Siu Fung, Betty (I)

Interviewee: Miss Ha Sum Mei (T4)

- I: I would like to ask you some questions concerning the teaching of vocabulary. The first question is, what is your methodology of teaching vocabulary?
- T4: When I teach students the articles in the textbooks, I teach them new words at that time. There are a lot of vocabulary in the comprehension passages. Sometimes, I teach them vocabulary using newspaper clipping.
- I: Then, how do you teach a new word?
- T4: For a new word, I tell them the pronunciation first. I read the word twice. Then, I explain the meaning to them. For schools which adopt English as the medium of instruction, I use English for explanation. For CMI schools, I first write the English explanation on the blackboard. However, students always ask me to explain the meaning in Cantonese.
- I: Do you require them to repeat the words until they know how to pronounce them?
- T4: Yes, sure. But they don't really like to read the words. I often tell them that **practice makes perfect and they will know how to pronounce the words if they practise more.**
- I: I see. The second question is, what are your opinions towards the ways you teach vocabulary?
- T4: I think I've explained the word meaning clearly but I don't know if students have really learned those words.
- I: Yes. Then, what are the difficulties you've encountered when teaching vocabulary?
- T4: There are too many vocabulary and students are poor in English. There are so many words that they don't know. In addition, they seldom do revision except I tell them that there will be dictation or something like that. If not, they don't revise and it's difficult for them to learn any words.
- I: How about the difficulties faced by the students?
- T4: Their problem is that there are too many new words for them to learn. They should work very hard.
- I: In your opinion, what are the students' attitudes towards the ways they are taught?
- T4: Mmm ..... They want me to use Cantonese for explanation. They just want to understand the meaning of words directly.
- I: Do they find the way you teach boring or interesting?
- T4: It's difficult to say if it is boring or not. If they are interested in learning English, they won't feel boring. If they are not interested in it, they must find it a bit boring.
- I: I see. The next question is, how do you feel about the traditional grammar-translation approach to EFL vocabulary teaching? Let me explain what does it mean by the traditional grammar-translation approach first. For example, the

use of bilingual wordlists, the adoption of Chinese to explain word meanings and also a heavy emphasis on pronunciation. What's your opinion towards this approach?

T4: I think focusing on pronunciation is needed as students are usually poor in pronunciation. I don't object using Cantonese for explanation if students can really get the word meaning directly. If English is used but students don't like it, they will eventually lose the motivation to learn.

I: In your opinion, how can students learn more words?

T4: They should read more books. I think they can read more novels, newspapers or magazines. Read something that they are interested in. If they like playing basketball, they can read those magazines about NBA. However, I think reading fictions is the best as they can learn a lot of words that are very useful for composition.

I: Do you find the Extensive Reading Scheme (ERS) effective?

T4: I think it's quite effective. Students do extensive reading once a week, it's a kind of variation for them. In addition, they don't need to learn words from the textbooks only. It's quite interesting for them.

I: Do you think they are holding the right attitudes when they do the reading? Or they just want to be the one who reads the fastest?

T4: I think most of them are not doing it properly. They don't read carefully. Maybe it is related to the atmosphere in class. If everyone is reading carefully, students will follow suit and read carefully also.

I: That's the end of the interview, thanks a lot for your help.



Date: 7<sup>th</sup> January, 2002

Time: 2:30 pm

Interviewer: Yeung Siu Fung, Betty (I)

Interviewee: Miss Shui Sze Nga (T5)

I: I would like to ask you some questions concerning the teaching of vocabulary. The first question is, what is your methodology of teaching vocabulary?

T5: Before I teach vocabulary, I ask students to underline the words. I write those words that I think they don't understand on the blackboards and ask them to underline the words in the textbook. Then, I ask them to look up the words in the dictionary at home.

I: Mmm .....

T5: During lesson, I write the words on the board and ask students to write down the Chinese meaning next to the words. First, it can make sure that they have done their homework. Second, it can add interest to word learning since most junior form students like to write on the board.

I: When you teach words, do you require your students to repeat the words several times until they know how to pronounce the words?

T5: Yes, I require them to pronounce. After I have explained the meaning to them, I ask them to repeat the words. Each word for several times.

I: Then, where are the words from?

T5: Most of them are from the comprehension passages.

I: I see. They are from the textbooks.

T5: In addition, students have to learn those words in the textbooks for tests and examinations.

I: Those words are the ones which you think they don't know, right?

T5: Yes, and some which are of common usage.

I: Mmm ..... The second question is, what are your opinions towards the ways you teach vocabulary?

T5: Er ..... I think it's quite monotonous.

I: Quite monotonous.

T5: It's quite a traditional approach. I just teach them words one by one and teach them how to pronounce.

I: I see. What difficulties do you have in teaching vocabulary?

T5: Even though students have learned the words, when it comes to application, for instance, when they are asked to make sentences or fill in the blanks using the words they have learned, they can seldom do so.

I: I see. In your opinion, what are the student's attitudes towards the ways they are taught?

T5: Er ..... they enjoy the time most when they can come to the front of class to write down the Chinese word meaning. Concerning pronunciation, they also follow my instruction. However, it is not guaranteed if they can really remember the words after class. So, I have to revise with them repeatedly.

I: Do you think they enjoy learning words?

T5: Er ..... they learn words for the sake of examinations.



- I: The next question is, how do you feel about the traditional grammar-translation approach to EFL vocabulary teaching? Let me explain what does it mean by the traditional grammar-translation approach first. For example, the use of bilingual wordlists, the adoption of Chinese to explain word meanings and also a heavy emphasis on pronunciation. What's your opinion towards this approach?
- T5: I think English is for communication, therefore I think pronunciation should not be the only focus. Even if you pronounce a words a bit different, people may still get what you mean.
- I: That means this method is not that good since there is a lot rote learning, right?
- T5: Yes. Even if they have learned the words, if they are not related to them, it's useless.
- I: In your opinion, how can students learn a lot of words?
- T5: It depends mostly on the learners themselves. One should take the initiative to learn words. Learners can pay more attention to the words around them. For instance, the MTR station names. They are more interested in the things which are related to their daily lives.
- I: Pay more attention to words around them.
- T5: Yes. They can go to the supermarkets and learn the names of different kinds of goods.
- I: The last question is concerned with the Extensive Reading Scheme (ERS). Do you think it is useful?
- T5: It's more beneficial for students who are hardworking. For those Band 4 or 5 students, they have to look up a lot of words in the storybooks. It will even have an adverse effect on their English learning.
- I: When having ERS lessons, do you think the students are holding the right attitudes?
- T5: Most of them are not really interested in reading. They don't think they can get anything from reading books. They are just doing something as ordered by the teachers. They will not develop the habit of self-learning.
- I: Do you think the storybooks can capture students' interest?
- T5: Students like to read those books which have a lot of pictures. For those books having a lot of words but few pictures, they don't like to read them. ERS lesson a waste of time for those weak students, I'd better devote the time to teach them other things, for example, grammar.
- I: I see. That's the end of the interview. Thanks a lot.





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